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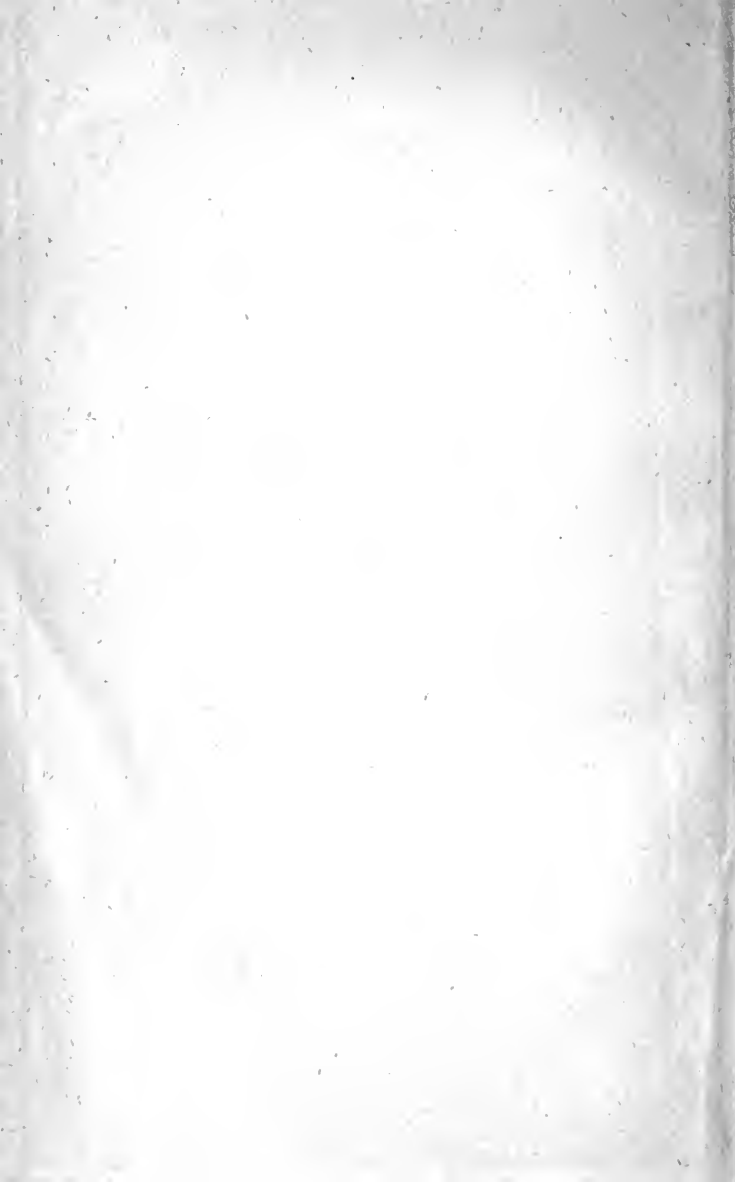
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AND THE HISTORY OF
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BY THE AUTHOR OF
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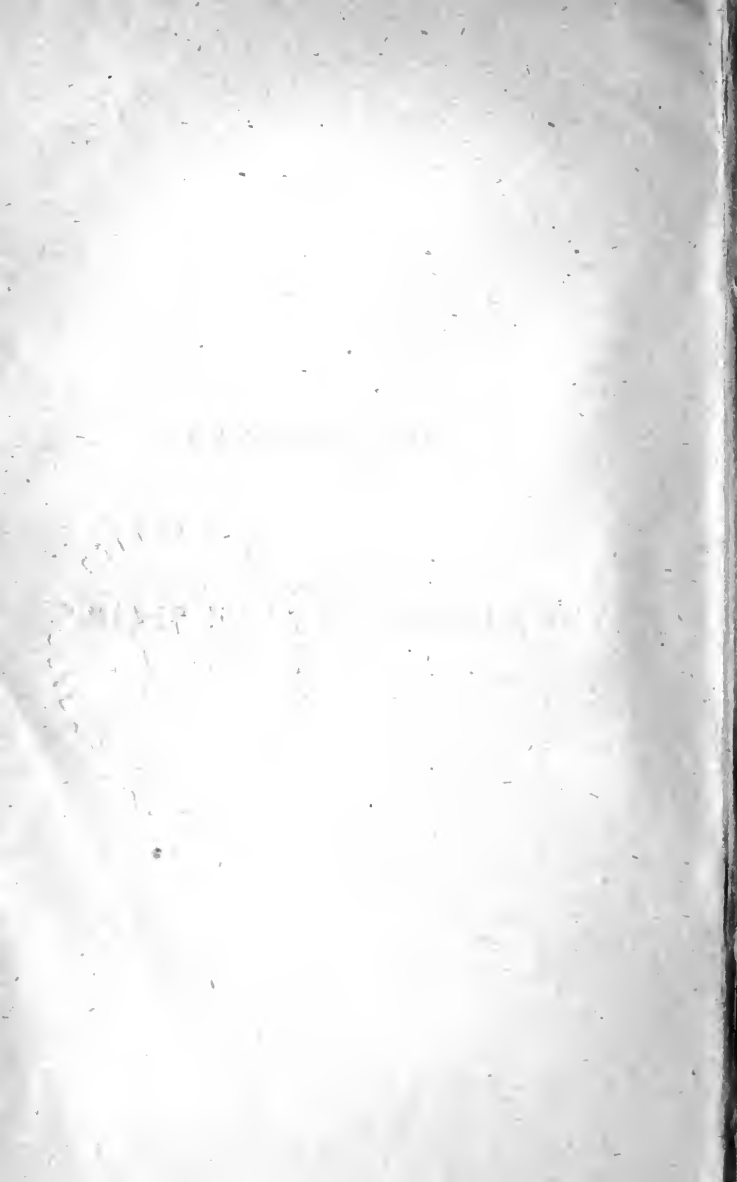
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SOME PASSAGES

IN

THE LIFE OF MR ADAM BLAIR.



ADAM BLAIR.

CHAPTER I.

SELDOM has the earth held a couple of human beings so happy in each other as were Mr Adam Blair and his wife. They had been united very early in love, and early in wedlock. Ten years had passed over their heads since their hands were joined together; and during all that time their heart-strings had never once vibrated in discord. Their pleasures had been the same, and these innocent; their sorrows had been all in common; and their hours of affliction had, even more than their hours of enjoyment, tended to knit them together. Of four children whom God had given them, three had been taken speedily away, — one girl only, the first pledge of their love, had been spared to them. She was now a beautiful fair-haired creature, of eight years old. In her rested the tenderness and the living delight of both; yet, often at the fall of evening would they walk out hand in hand with their bright-eyed child, and shed together tears, to her mysterious, over the small grassy mounds in the adjoining village cemetery, beneath which the lost blossoms of their affection had been buried.

Adam Blair had had his share of human suffering; but hitherto the bitter cup had always contained sweet-

ness at the close of the draught. The oil and the balm had flowed plentifully for every wound, and his spirit was not only unbroken, but composed, happy, cheerful, "with sober cheer." The afflictions that had been sent to him had kept him calm; and all men said, that he was an humble, but none that he was a dejected, Christian. What the secret errors of his spirit might have been, it is not for us to guess. But he was destined to undergo severer chastenings; and who shall doubt that there was cause enough for the uplifting of the rod of love?

After the death of the last of these three infants, Mrs Blair dried her tears, and endeavoured to attend as usual to all the duties of her household. But the serenity of her temper had been tinged with a shade of grief which she could not dispel; and although she smiled upon her husband, it was with pale lips and melancholy eyes that she did so. If there were moments in which all her sorrows were forgotten, these were few and transitory. Her husband subdued himself that he might constrain her; he talked with her in a tone that was manly as well as tender; he talked like a Christian as well as a father; he caressed his remaining child, and twined the fingers of the mother's hand among her flowing ringlets; he hoped the best; he hoped even to the last. But if it be true that love often lends keenness to the eye, it is not less true that the sight of affection is sometimes the slowest and the dimmest of all; and he had kept striving to nourish his hopes, and striving successfully too, for many months after it had been once a common remark among the kind-hearted people of Cross-Meikle, that "the Minister's wife, poor body, would never hold up her head again."

And, in truth, it was as they said. It may be, the seated disease of the mind, by slow but sure degrees, communicated its poison to the body; at all events, the frame, like the inhabiting spirit, soon exhibited all the features of decay. The long melancholy summer passed away, and the songs of the harvest reapers were heard in

the surrounding fields ; while all, from day to day, was becoming darker and darker within the Manse of Cross-Meikle. Worn to a shadow—pale as ashes—feeble as a child—the dying mother had, for many weeks, been unable to quit her chamber ; and the long-hoping husband at last felt his spirit faint within him ; for even he perceived that the hour of separation could not much farther be deferred—he prayed by her bed-side—he strove even yet to smile and to speak of hope, but his lips trembled as he spake ; and neither he nor his wife were deceived, for their thoughts were the same, and years of love had taught them too well all the secrets of each other's looks as well as hearts.

Nobody witnessed their last parting. The room was darkened, and no one was within it but themselves and their child, who sat by the bed-side, weeping in silence she knew not wherefore—for of death she knew little, except the terrible name ; and her father had as yet been, if not brave enough to shed no tears, at least strong enough to conceal them.—Silently and gently was the pure spirit released from its clay ; but manly groans were, for the first time, heard above the sobs and wailings of the infant ; and the listening household shrunk back from the door, for they knew that the blow had been stricken ; and the voice of humble sympathy feared to make itself be heard in the sanctuary of such affliction. The village doctor arrived just at that moment ; he listened for a few seconds, and, being satisfied that all was over, he also turned away. His horse had been fastened to the hook by the Manse door ; he drew out the bridle, and led the animal softly over the turf, but did not mount again until he had far passed the outskirts of the green.

Perhaps an hour might have elapsed before Mr Blair opened the window of the room in which his wife had died. His footstep had been heard for some time hurriedly traversing and retraversing the floor ; but at last he stopped where the nearly fastened shutters of the window admitted but one broken line of light into the

chamber. He threw every thing open with a bold hand, and the uplifting of the window produced a degree of noise, to the like of which the house had for some time been unaccustomed ; he looked out, and saw the external world bright before him, with all the rich colourings of a September evening. The sun had just sunk behind the distant screen of the Argyll and Dumbartonshire hills ; the outline of huge Benlomond glowed like a blood-red jewel against the wide golden sky beyond ; a thick and hazy cloud of mist had gathered over the rich valleys to the westward, through which, here and there, some far-off bending of the river flashed for a moment in a streak of reflected crimson ; near at hand, the tall elms that surround the village churchyard stood with all their brown leaves whispering in the faint breeze of the twilight ; a fine herd of cattle were passing along the neighbouring "green loaning," in a long deliberate line ; the hum of the village sent an occasional echo through the intervening hedge-rows ; all was quiet and beautiful above and below ; the earth seemed to be clothed all over with sights and sounds of serenity ; and the sky, deepening into darker and darker blue overhead, shewed the earliest of its stars intensely twinkling, as if ready to harbinger or welcome the coming moon.

The widowed man gazed for some minutes in silence upon the glorious calm of Nature, and then turned with a sudden start to the side of the room where the wife of his bosom had so lately breathed ;—he saw the pale dead face ; the black ringlets parted on the brow ; the marble hand extended upon the sheet ; the unclosed glassy eyes ; and the little girl leaning towards her mother in a gaze of half-horrified bewilderment. He drew near to the couch—grasped the cold hand, and cried, "O God ! O God !"—a shriek, not a prayer ; he closed the stiffening eye-lids over the soft but ghastly orbs ; kissed the brow, the cheek, the lips, the bosom, and then rushed down the stairs, and away out, bare-headed, into the fields, before any one could stop him, or ask whither he was going.

There is an old thick grove of pines almost immediately behind the house ; and after staring about him for a moment on the green, he leapt hastily over the little brook that skirts it, and plunged within the shade of the trees. The breeze was rustling the black boughs high over his head, and whistling along the bare ground beneath him. He rushed, he knew not whither, on and on, between those naked brown trunks, till he was in the heart of the wood ; and there, at last, he tossed himself down on his back among the withered fern leaves and mouldering fir-cones. Here every thing accorded with the gloom of a sick and shuddering soul, and he lay in a sort of savage stupor, half-exulting as the wind moaned and sighed through the darkness about him, in the depth (as he thought, the *utmost* depth) of abandonment and misery. Long-restrained, long-vanquished passions took their turn to storm within him—fierce thoughts chased each other through his bosom—sullen dead despair came to banish or to drown them—mournful gleams of tenderness melted all his spirit for a moment, and then made room again for the strong graspings of horror. All the past things of life floated before him, distinct in their lineaments, yet twined together, the darkest and the gayest, into a sort of union, that made them all appear alike dark. The mother, that had nursed his years of infancy—the father, whose hairs he had long before laid in the grave—sisters, brothers, friends, all dead and buried—the angel forms of his own early-ravished offspring—all crowded round and round him, and then rushing away, seemed to bear from him, as a prize and a trophy, the pale image of his expiring wife. Again *she* returned, and she alone was present with him—not the pale expiring wife, but the young radiant woman—blushing, trembling, smiling, panting on his bosom, whispering to him all her hopes, and fears, and pride, and love, and tenderness, and meekness, like a bride ; and then again all would be black as night. He would start up and gaze around, and see nothing but the sepulchral gloom of the wood, and hear nothing but the cold

blasts among the leaves. In a moment, it seemed as if years and years had intervened since he had become a widower. Every thing looked distant, chill, remote, uncertain, cut off by the impassable wide gulf of death. Down he lay again, and, covering his face with his hands, struggled to overcome the strength of delusions, with which all his soul was surrounded. Now boiling with passions, now calm as the dead, fearing, hoping, doubting, believing, lamenting, praying, and cursing—yes, cursing—all in succession. Oh, who shall tell what ages of agony may roll over one bruised human spirit, in one brief hour!

The storm of desolation was followed by a lowering state of repose. He lay insensible alike to all things, stretched out at all his length, with his eyes fixed in a stupid steadfastness upon one great massy branch that hung over him—his bloodless lips fastened together, as if they had been glued—his limbs like things entirely destitute of life and motion—every thing about him cold, stiff, and senseless. Minute after minute passed heavily away as in a dream—hour after hour rolled unheeded into the abyss—the stars twinkled through the pine-tops, and disappeared—the moon arose in her glory, rode through the clear autumn heaven, and vanished—and all alike unnoted by the prostrate widower. He only, in whose hand are all times, and all seasons, and all the workings of the spirit of man, can know what was and was not done within, during this space of apparent blankness. Not in dreams alone, it may be, does the soul work unconsciously.

Adam Blair came forth from among the fir-trees in the gray light of the morning, walked leisurely and calmly several times round the garden-green, which lay immediately in front of his house, then lifted the latch for himself, and glided with light and hasty footsteps up stairs to the room, where, for some weeks past, he had been accustomed to occupy a solitary bed. The wakeful servants heard him shut his door behind him; one of them having gone out anxiously, had traced him to his

privacy, but none of them had ventured to think of disturbing it. Until he had come back, not one of them thought of going to bed. Now, however, they did so, and the house of sorrow was all over silent.

CHAPTER II.

It was the custom of the house, that a servant rung a bell every morning at eight o'clock, to assemble all the family for prayers. That morning the old man, whose common duty this was, did not venture to perform it but not many minutes had elapsed beyond the accustomed hour, ere the bell was rung, and all, so soon as it was heard, entered the parlour with their Bibles in their hands. When they came in, they found that Mr Blair had already taken his seat, and had the book lying open upon the table before him. Little Sarah was sitting on her stool close beside him, and his left hand rested upon her shoulder, while the right was occupied in turning over the leaves of the Bible. The child's eyes were red, but she too was composed, she too was handling her book, and turning over its leaves. As for Mr Blair, he did not look up when he heard his servants enter, but as soon as they had taken their seats, he uttered his usual preliminary petition much in his usual manner, and then proceeded to read aloud the lines of the 121st Psalm,—

“ I to the hills will lift mine eyes,
From whence doth come mine aid,” &c.

in a tone of serenity and firmness, that filled the hearts of those who heard him with a mixed sentiment of surprise and veneration,—surprise at the strength exhibited, and veneration for that deep sway of religious feelings, by which, as they rightly judged, such strength in weakness had been produced. They had not witnessed the struggle, but they guessed something of what had been ; and they, simple as they were, had sense enough and

wisdom enough to revere the faith which had passed through such fires, to come forth purified, not tarnished. After the Psalm had been sung, he read the 14th chapter of the Gospel according to St John, and concluded with a prayer, such as none, most surely, but a sorely chastened heart, could have conceived, although throughout the whole of it there was no express allusion to the particular situation of the person by whom it was uttered. Once or twice the voice faltered, but he soon recovered himself; and when the service was over, and all had once more arisen from their knees, I believe the countenance of the young bereaved minister bore fewer traces of trouble than any other countenance in the room.

Even in the house of sorrow, the ordinary matters of life go on, for the most part, in their ordinary course; and I will confess, that to me this has always appeared to be one of the most truly affecting things in the world. The cloth is laid, the meal is prepared, the bottle is brought up from the cellar, the family sit around the table—all these affairs go on just as duly the day that the mistress or the master of a family is dead, as any other day in the year. Grief, even the sincerest and deepest grief, occupies, after all, when the first triumph of its energies is over, no more than a place in the back-ground. The front of life is as smooth as ever.

All this was so within the Manse of Cross-Meikle; of course still more so round about its walls. Servants passed to and fro about the occupations of the house, inquiring friends and acquaintances came and went, the little motherless girl was seen from time to time busied in the garden among the few lingering flowers of the autumn. Mr Blair himself was not visible to any but his own family, and to them only at the hours when the family were accustomed to be together. At other times he was in his chamber alone, or with his orphan by his side—the accustomed volumes lying about him—to the eye the same quiet, grave man, or nearly so, that he had been a week or a month before. The closed windows of the chamber in which the body lay, furnished

the only outward and visible sign that death was in the house.

Mr Blair was sitting by himself on the evening of the third day ; apparently he had been reading, but the light had deserted him, and his book had been laid down on the table near him, when the door of his room was opened, and some one, as if hesitating to go farther, stood just within the threshold, with his finger on the handle of the door. Mr Blair did not observe, for a minute or two, that the door of his room had been opened, but at last his eye happened to travel in that direction, and he perceived that John Maxwell, one who had for many years been the oldest among the elders of his parish, was come to visit him in his affliction.

"Come in, John," said he ; "so old a friend may come at any time ; I am glad to see you — sit down, John ;" and in saying so, he had taken the worthy man by the hand, and was leading him towards the seat from which he himself had just arisen.

"The Lord is gracious, Mr Blair — the Lord is very gracious. It is HE that giveth, and it is HE that taketh away. Blessed be his holy name ! Oh, sir, I thought the Lord would never surely leave your father's son, and I see he has not left you."

The old man meant to speak words of comfort, but ere he had done, his voice failed him, and the tears were gushing over his cheeks as he looked in his young minister's face, and wrung the hand that had been extended to him. It was no wonder, surely, that the afflicted man sympathized with his comforter, or that some minutes had elapsed before either of them was in any condition to renew the conversation.

Nor shall we trouble the reader with any needless detail of it. Let it be sufficient to know, that on the part of Mr Blair, it was all that could become any man afflicted as he was, and much more than could have been expected from so young a sufferer. The minister and the elder laid their hearts open to each other ; they wept, they prayed, and they took sweet counsel together. John had been

more than once nerved, softened, and renerved again, ere he at length took courage to whisper into Mr Blair's ear, that "his presence was wanted in the chamber." Mr Blair understood perfectly what the old man meant. He arose at once, and walked towards the place where his wife's remains were about to be closed up for ever from all human view.

It is the rule in Scotland, that no male, except it be a husband, a father, or a brother, can be permitted to remain in the room while the coffin-lid is screwed down upon a female corpse. John Maxwell attended his minister to the door, therefore, but no farther. Within, three or four village matrons only, and the female servants of the family, were assembled. Mr Blair entered, and found them in the midst of all the fearful paraphernalia with which it was (and is) the custom of Scotland to deepen the gloom of the most sad of all possible occasions. Well as he was acquainted with all the habitudes of his country-folks, he had never before brought fully home to his imagination all that now met his view. The knots, the ribbons, the cushions, the satin, the tinsel — all that melancholy glitter turned his soul sick within him, and once more he yielded; not, however, as before, nor to the same enemies. Sadness, weariness, heart-sickness — these were now his visitants. He stood pale and feeble, while the tears flowed over his cheeks in utter silence. One of the old women thought that a sight of his wife's face might bring him, through emotion, to himself again, and she lifted the veil. But even this was of no use, and to no purpose. The man was altogether unnerved — the strong-souled Adam Blair was in that hour a weanling, and he wept on as silently, and not a whit more bitterly than before. They led him, unresisting, to his room; he allowed himself, for the first time of his life, to be undressed by hands other than his own. After he had been put to bed, John Maxwell stood over against him for some minutes, whispering, "Wae's me, wae's me!" He then commanded all the rest to retire, and, kneeling by the bed-side, began to pray aloud in the old sublime sim-

plicity of the true village worthies of Scotland. The priest felt in his soul the efficacious piety of the elder of Israel.

“ Good night, John Maxwell.”

“ God bless you — God strengthen you !” and so they parted.

The next day, no worldly work was done in the parish of Cross-Meikle. At twelve o'clock the church-bell began to toll, and the friends of Mr Blair were seen walking slowly in twos and threes along the green lanes which lead towards the Church and Manse ; while the rest, assembling in the burying ground, awaited the forthcoming of the mournful procession. Such as had been particularly invited, entered the house. One by one they were ushered into the parlour of the Manse, and not one approached it without something like a feeling of fear. But that feeling was dispelled in a moment : Mr Blair stood in the midst of the apartment with a face of such calmness and composure, as if he had been the only man there that day whose business it was, not to receive comfort, but to give it. To each of the guests who entered the room he went up separately, and extended his hand in silence. Not one word was uttered by any one.

Each took his station ; and then, a salver of wine having been handed round, Mr Blair himself called upon the eldest of his brother clergymen present to ask a blessing. It is in that form, that the funeral prayer of the Scottish ceremonial is announced and uttered. The person called upon to pronounce it on this occasion was by no means one who had lived on any very particular terms of intimacy with Mr Blair ; neither was he any great favourite among the country people of the neighbourhood. He bore, in general, the character of a dry, sarcastic sort of man, and, being very old, was personally little known, except among the immediate circle of his own friends and connections. Yet not one that heard Dr Muir pray that day, would have wished the duty to have fallen into other hands. The old man had himself experienced the sorrows of life, and he spake like one

who was about to go down into the grave, leaning on the only arm in which strength lies.

It was a touching spectacle to see the church-yard when the procession entered it. Old and young stood around unbonneted, and few dry eyes were turned on Mr Blair when he took his station at the head of the opened grave. The clods, as they rattled down, sent a shudder to every bosom, and when the spade was heard clapping the replaced sod into its form, every one turned away his eyes, lest his presence should be felt as an intrusion on the anguish of the minister. He, on his part, endured it wonderfully ; but the dead mother had been laid down by the side of her dead children, and perhaps, at that moment, he was too humble to repine at their re-union. He uncovered and bowed himself over the grave when the last turf was beat down, and then, leaning on the arm of John Maxwell, walked back slowly through the silent rows of his people to the solitude of his Manse.

After he was out of sight, not a few of them drew near to contemplate the new-made grave, and the old were not slow to retrace the memory of those of the same family who had heretofore been committed to the same dust. On the wall of the church, immediately adjoining, a large marble tablet had been affixed, to record the pious labours of Mr Blair's father, who preceded him in the pastoral charge of that parish ; and most of those who were present could still recall with distinctness the image of the good old man, and the grave tones of his voice in exhortation. But there was a green head-stone there, rudely fashioned, and more rudely sculptured, to which their fingers were pointed with feelings of yet loftier veneration. That stone marked the spot where Mr Blair's grandfather was laid—a simple peasant of the parish—one whose time on earth had been abridged in consequence of what he had done and suffered in days when the citizen of a Christian land durst not sing a psalm in the wilderness, without the risk of being hewn into pieces by the sword of some godless slave. They who are acquainted with Scotland—above all with the

west of Scotland — cannot be ignorant of the reverence which is still cherished for *the seed of the martyrs*. Such feelings, I am sorry to say, were more widely spread, and more intensely felt, in former times than they are now. It was to them, in no small degree, that Mr Blair was indebted for the deep affection with which his person and all his concerns were, and always had been, regarded by the people of his parish.

CHAPTER III.

Nobody, after that day, ever heard Mr Blair mention his wife's name. A little picture of her in crayon, which had been painted when she was a very young girl, had hitherto hung over the mantel-piece in the parlour, but it was now removed into the room where he slept, and placed opposite to the foot of his bed. The most of her books were taken from the room in which she died, and arranged in the same apartment, and after all this had been done, he was never known to enter that fatal chamber. For some time before Mrs Blair's death, the duty of teaching young Sarah to read and write had devolved upon him — and in this duty he continued to exert himself. After dinner, the child seldom left the room in which he sat, till it was time for her to retire to rest. He read to her, he talked to her, he listened to all her little stories, and took a part in all her little occupations. But though he had been used to take much delight in hearing her sing before, he was never heard now to bid her try either *The bonnie wee crowden doo*, or *Bird Marjory*, or *The Earl of Bothwell's wife*, or any other of the favourite ballads of that part of the country. Sometimes, indeed, when the girl was singing to herself in her chamber, he would stand listening to her for a few seconds behind the door, but she never knew herself to be singing in her father's hearing, unless when she joined her voice close beside his knee in the domestic psalmody.

The servants remarked all this, and said it was no wonder, for little Sarah's singing put one very much in mind of her mother, when she used to be merry, in the first years of her marriage, by the fire-side.

Some of those, however, who had less opportunity of understanding the character and feelings of the man, were sufficiently inclined to put quite another sort of construction on many parts of Mr Blair's conduct and demeanour the winter after this calamity befell him. There are such a number of people in the world who cannot conceive of affliction apart from the images of white handkerchiefs, long weepers, and black sealing-wax, that it is no great wonder this should have been so. Of all this class of observances Mr Blair was somewhat negligent; of many of them he did not even know that any such things existed: — and accordingly, to give one instance in place of fifty, the Presbytery to which Mr Blair belonged, had not met above three or four times, before — some one remarking that Mr Blair had not yet made his appearance among them since his wife's death — another of the reverend brethren made answer, in rather a sneering sort of tone, that the minister of Cross-Meikle had, it was likely, work enough upon his hands, if he designed, as was said about Semplehaugh, “to fill up the vacancy” before summer. I am sorry to say, that this sarcasm was uttered by the same Dr Muir, whose very different behaviour on the day of Mrs Blair's funeral I have already noticed. But the truth is, the Doctor had taken it a little amiss, that Mr Blair had omitted to send an answer to a long letter of condolence which he had despatched to Cross-Meikle the morning after that sorrowful day; and was, moreover, somewhat displeased to find that he had been seen often on horseback, and even known to spend the New Year's-day at the house of Semplehaugh — while, as yet, he had not once made his appearance at the Manse of Cambuslee. The last part of his speech was not probably intended to be taken as if uttered with any serious meaning; but Dr Muir was never sorry to have an opportunity of cracking a joke at

the expense of the worthy Lady Dowager of Semplehaugh, (the widow of the gentleman who had been patron of both his parish and Mr Blair's,) in whose good graces he was pleased to imagine, that he himself had been rather on the decline ever since Mr Blair had become minister of Cross-Meikle. But a man who has the reputation of being a joker, is generally, in his own person, a favourite subject of jokes. And accordingly, no sooner had Dr Muir left the room in which the Presbytery dinner took place, than Mr Robertson cocked his spectacles with an air of great sagacity, and told Mr Allan that he shrewdly suspected Miss Anne Muir would have no objection to become little Sarah Blair's step-mother. At which joke Mr Allan laughed very heartily, and Mr Robertson was exceedingly flattered to find his joke took so well, not being at all aware that Mr Allan knew perfectly well that he, Mr Robertson, had paid his addresses to Dr Muir's well-portioned daughter about eighteen months before, — and withal, received such an answer as rendered it not very likely he should ever think of renewing them.

Now, all these parsonic jokes were fair enough in their way, with the exception of Dr Muir's ill-natured hint about the old lady of Semplehaugh. There was not an elderly lady in the whole county, against whom such a sarcasm could have been directed with less reason. She was a most excellent woman. As wife, mother, and mistress of a family, she had always conducted herself in the most irreproachable manner possible. She was a sincere devout Christian, and though she had a very tender regard for Mr Blair, both for his father's sake and for his own, I believe she would just as soon have thought of marrying the venerable Dr Muir himself as her young minister.

Mrs Semple was one of that (once numerous) class of ladies in Scotland, who, virtuous and religious, and every way estimable as they may be, do a great many things as if they believed the stomach to be by far the most important part in the whole construction of every human being. For instance, if she heard of a long absent son or

brother returning to any family in the village, her first speech was sure to be — “Poor bodies, poor bodies, I’m very glad to hear it, I’m very heartily glad to hear it. I hope they’ll have something comfortable in the house — It would be a burning shame if they had not a good supper the night;” and the end of her speech would in all probability be a whisper to her butler — “Thomas, take down the cauld pye to John Anderson’s, wi’ my compliments — and say, I’m very glad to hear their calland’s come back — and stay, Thomas, since ye’re about it, ye may as weel tak some o’ yon finnan haddocks, and a bottle or twa of your ale wi’ you too.” After which she would resume her usual tone, and say once or twice over again, “Poor John Anderson! it would be a crying sin if they had naething but parritch on sic a night for their suppers!”

In cases of affliction, Mrs Semple’s sympathy was most commonly expressed in the same sort of substantial method; and accordingly, for some time before Mrs Blair’s death, the Semplehaugh errand-boy very seldom rode to the post-town (which he always did once a-week for the newspapers,) without having some can of jelly, or fricassee of chickens, or string of trouts, or something or other, which the good lady thought the sick woman might fancy, to be dropt from his basket in passing the Manse. The day before the funeral, she sent off, in the same fashion, a dozen of Madeira and a piece of cake, saying — “Poor Mr Adam, I’m sure my heart’s wae when I think on him. I’m sure it’s not for him to be gaun down to the cellar, and giving out wine at sic a time as this, and it would not be decent if there was nothing comfortable to be set before his company. He’ll have meikle need o’ a glass o’ wine himsel, poor man, when he comes hame again.” — In short, there was no end with her to such attentions as she conceived might be acceptable; and little as most of these might be in accordance with the real necessities of Mr Blair’s situation, it would have been a poor sign of him if he had not felt, and, in due time, expressed his sense of the kindness

from which, he well knew, all of them proceeded. The affectionate interest she displayed in regard to little Sarah, was a favour for which he might well feel deeper, if not sincerer gratefulness. Indeed, Mrs Semple had all along conducted herself in the most friendly, or rather, in the most *motherly* manner. And Mr Blair, be his faults what they might, (and, no doubt, they were many,) was not a man whose heart ever tasted the baseness that recoils from the sense of obligation. He might be a proud man in some things ; but he had no pride about him that ever warred with gratitude.

It may be very probable, notwithstanding all that has been said, that — excellent woman, and sincere Christian, and universally benevolent, as the Lady Semplehaugh most unquestionably was — she might have shewn fewer marks of attention to Mr Blair, had he been an ill-favoured old man, instead of being what everybody must have acknowledged him to be, a very handsome young one. It may perhaps be mere frailty which makes both men and women, the best and the wisest of them, acknowledge at times, by their looks and actions at the least, if not by their words, the power and effect of personal comeliness ; but if it be a frailty, it is certainly a very common one, and has been so in all ages of the world, and will probably continue to be so, as long as human creatures shall be fashioned in soul and body as they are and have been. And indeed, although in so doing she followed a rule of somewhat less general acceptance, Mrs Semple herself had no scruple about confessing that she liked Mr Blair so much the better, and took so much the warmer interest about all his concerns, because he was an exceedingly comely and amiable-looking young man. Even his sermons, she said it openly enough, would have had less effect upon her, had his countenance been a less expressive index and expositor of his ideas ; and perhaps she might have fancied it to become so, had he only exchanged his own fine raven hair for the most reverent-looking periwig in the country. It is wonderful with what ease the female fancy can at

all times discover likenesses among the objects of their liking ; and accordingly Mrs Semple had not unfrequently furnished a little amusement to her old friends, by asking if they did not perceive some cast of resemblance between the bonny young minister (so she called him) and her own deceased husband. [But she had never, we may suppose, put such a question to Dr Muir ; otherwise, in all probability, he might have been tempted to entertain his brethren at the Presbytery dinner with rather a different strain of wit.]

Many weeks, therefore, had not elapsed before Mr Blair went up to Semplehaugh-House, (or, as the country people more commonly called it, the Castletown,) to pay his respects to this old friend and patroness of his family. It has already been noticed, that the attentions of the old lady to his orphan girl were in a particular manner pleasing to him ; and, indeed, he would neither have been a very kind, nor a very considerate father, if this had not been so. It was impossible for him, when he had acquired some power of reflecting calmly on all that had happened, not to perceive, that, in case he himself should be carried off early in life, as his beloved wife had been, the friendship of such a person as Mrs Semple might come to be of the utmost consequence in every way to the welfare of his child ; and he therefore considered himself as bound, by the duty of a parent, to give little Sarah every opportunity of being as much as might be under the eye of the good lady ; while, at the same time, he was not at all insensible to the immediate advantages which his own mind might be likely to derive from mingling in such society as the mansion-house afforded. There was no other family of any rank or worldly consequence in the parish, nor any one in its immediate vicinity, with which he had formed habits of the same sort of early intimacy and mutual attachment. Tenderly beloved as he was by the humbler members of his own flock, and freely as he was accustomed to mingle with them on all occasions, there were times, and, of course, many times, in which his mind felt the want of

some more intellectual sort of intercourse than was to be expected at that period among people in their situation ; and there was no place where he was, at least, so likely to meet with the supply of this mental want, as beneath the roof of Semplehaugh. Having suppressed within himself, to the utmost of his power, the first unruliness of his passionate grief, he was wise enough to know, that, though every great work of the spirit must be the work of solitude, the solitary exertions of the spirit must always be apt to flag and languish, unless recourse be had at fit intervals to those social stimulants which the Author of our nature has formed the strongest of us to need, and enabled the weakest of us to relish. And Mr Blair acted as he thought it was his duty to act, although indeed, in the then shattered condition of his mind, it often required a considerable struggle and exertion before he could bring himself to do so.

Now, although several such struggles had already been successfully made, it certainly was with undiminished reluctance that he set out on New Year's-day with his daughter towards Semplehaugh. He had dined there almost every New Year's-day since he could recollect any thing ; and but that day the year before, his wife had accompanied him in all the innocent gaiety of youth and the season. He would much rather have staid at home ; and yet, when he looked round him in the morning, and saw his loss in every object that met his view, there were moments when he shrunk from the prospect of spending the day and the long winter evening, that used to be so happy at that time of the year, in solitude. He could not bear, neither, to think of his poor little girl being condemned to sit by a single melancholy man's chair, when all the village was sure to be sending forth sounds of mirth and festivity. The end of it therefore was, that Mrs Semple's annual invitation was complied with ; and taking Sarah in his hand, he began, ere the beautiful clear frosty day had lost its brightness, to walk along the well-known path by the river side. The orphan, clad, as she of course was, all in her deepest mourning, did

not trip at her father's side past the door of one cottage, without receiving some pitying benediction from its affectionate tenants. How different from the joyous and hearty salutations which they had received the last time they trode together the same path on the same errand !

The sun had almost gone down in the west before they reached the long dark avenue which leads to the old house, and the rooks were already cawing loudly among the bleak branches of the tall leafless beeches. After walking for a quarter of a mile beneath the gloom of those venerable trees, the white turrets and blazing windows of the hospitable mansion were cheering objects even in the eyes of Mr Blair, and he entered the light and lofty chamber, where Mrs Semple received her company, with feelings, in spite of all that had come and gone, more approaching to a temperate species of elevation, than he had perhaps experienced ever since the day of his great calamity. The good old lady herself was in spirits of considerable buoyancy ; for her son, who had been absent for more than two years, had come home that morning unexpectedly, and the whole house was filled with visible exhilaration by the presence of the young Laird. Mr Blair, who refused his sympathy to no feelings of an innocent nature, would have thought himself a bad man, if he had not done his utmost to shew that he shared the happiness of his best and oldest friends upon such an occasion as this ; and he had power enough over himself to receive the grave but cordial salutation of Mr Semple in a way that surprised him, and filled the heart of his mother with new delight.

There was a considerable party that day at Semplehaugh — Mr Spens of Spenstarvit, a gentleman nearly connected with the family, who lived about ten miles off, and his two beautiful daughters — Miss Ogilvie, a fine, cheerful, old spinster, from Glasgow — the blithe Laird of Croscobie and his literary lady, and a variety of country neighbours besides. The huge rifted fir-trunks sent a roaring blaze up the chimney ; the old massive tankards

and salvers glittered on the side-boards ; the venison smoked upon the table ; and the claret flowed abundantly to the healths of the season. Mr Blair looked round him ; and could not help participating in the genial feelings visible on every countenance that met his view. From time to time, indeed, he betrayed in his manner something of that abstraction of thought with which those who have ever had misery seated at the roots of their hearts are acquainted, and the appearance of which furnishes at times so much amusement to the thoughtless people of the world. But, upon the whole, this was a cheerful evening, and the widowed minister partook in its cheerfulness. The conversation of the young Laird, who had spent the greater part of the last year in foreign countries, furnished new topics of attention and discussion. The kindness of manner universal in the company, had a soothing effect upon the only wounded mind that was there ; for the feeling of human kindness is, after all, not the feeblest reconciler to the ways and doings of this feeble and imperfect existence.

If any thing threw an occasional damp upon the general enjoyment of the day, it was the presence of a person whom I have not yet named, and who was the only one present that could be said to be a stranger in the circle of Semplehaugh-House. This was Mr Semple's tutor, who had been on the continent along with him, a smart, and rather pompous-looking young man, of the name of Jamieson, who, having performed the important exploit of a *grand tour*, had perhaps thought himself entitled to assume more of the external appearances of a man of the world than was, or indeed is yet, common among the probationers of the Scottish Church — and even to hold his head a good deal above such a plain parish priest of the old school, as he rightly supposed the minister of Cross-Meikle to be. Mr Blair, who had never in his life aspired to ape the fashions of a class to which he did not conceive himself to belong, was always in his own character, and therefore always in his own place. The *hauteur* which peeped through the great superficial civility

of Mr Jamieson's address in conversing with him, did not, however, simple man as he was, escape his observation. But all this was a very secondary matter. The evening was a happy evening, and Mr Blair had a share in its enjoyment a hundred times greater than he could have dreamt himself capable of, when he rose from his bed that morning. Healthful excitation of spirits was naturally followed by healthful repose; and Mr Blair, after having conducted the devotions of the numerous and attentive household, slept better that night than he had done for many, many long weeks before. He returned next day to the Manse, his little girl dancing every now and then before him on the path, and exhibiting to every acquaintance they met the finely bound little book which Mrs Semple had given her for her Christmas-box. A merry party were busy *curling* on the ice, as he crossed the bridge, and he paused for some minutes, contemplating, almost with his old interest, the state and progress of the game.

Such was the New Year's-day dinner at Semplehaugh, which had been so unkindly alluded to at the Presbytery dinner.

CHAPTER IV.

SHORTLY after the commencement of the New Year, the good Lady of Semplehaugh and her family removed to Edinburgh, where it was their custom to spend a considerable part of every winter season. Their departure deprived Mr Blair of a cheerful society, in which he mingled at least once a-week, and of many little occasional attentions and incidents which served to break and diversify the even and uniform tenor of his retired existence. The day on which he was to pay a visit at the mansion-house, was a thing to be looked forward to before it came, and to be looked back upon after it had passed. Above all, it was a thing to be continually

talked about by little Sarah ; and, in short, the want of it formed a blank in the domestic calendar of Cross-Meikle.

The winter, moreover, had set in with more than usual severity. Drifted snow deepened all the roads in the neighbourhood, and rendered them quite impassable, or very nearly so, for several weeks in succession ; and the profuse thaw which followed, made matters little better in a country where the soil consists, in so great a measure, of wet and heavy clay. To travel about to any distance in the midst of such a season, was a thing quite out of the question with Mr Blair, and nearly as much so with the few friends who remained in his neighbourhood during that part of the year. The gay, the busy, the active, had all fled to the cities ; and those who stayed were people who stayed only because they could not bear to be absent from their own homes, or preferred solitude to society. Except an occasional call from some brother of the cloth, and the every-day intercourse of his own humbler parishioners, Mr Blair had therefore little to disturb or vary the course of his own solitary life and meditations. It is no wonder that his melancholy sat down upon him every day more and more heavily in such a state of things as this ; and that the more heavy it became, his resolution to struggle with it grew so much the fainter and the feebler. The dark and gloomy skies by day, and the ghostly howlings of the winds about his lonely walls by night, harmonized with, and increased, the oppression of his spirits ;—all the dismal sights and signs of benumbed Nature afforded nutriment to his grief.

It is probable, that Mr Blair's mind might have soon learned to assume a different tone, had he happened to have his residence in a city, instead of a thinly-peopled country parish. Grief, such as his, shrinks at first from the busy aspects of man and the world ; but human nature will have its way, and the soul cannot long shut itself against the impressions of the bodily senses. The man of the city, besides, can scarcely keep himself unemployed, even if he have a mind to do so. The work of

the world is about him, and he must take his share in it. New sights force themselves upon the eye, and new duties and occupations upon the hands ; if new pleasures come not, new distresses will — to push the old sorrow from its seat, to replace it for a season, to make room for it again, it may be, — but not to make room for it such as it was in its first undisturbed and entire possession of the spirit.

The Sabbath, with its various duties and requirements, broke, in some measure, the torpor of Mr Blair's melancholy. When that day came round, he was compelled to bestow more attention upon his personal appearance — and even this was not without its salutary effect. But, what was of infinitely greater importance, he was compelled to exert his faculties. In spite of himself, the sight of the Christian congregation stimulated his spirit ; the sound of their simple psalmody sent a trumpet to his heart ; and when he rose to lead the prayers of his people, the ancient fervours of his devout and affectionate soul kindled the whole man, and shone out clearly once more from amidst the weary mists in which they had been smothered and obscured. Such temporary elevations were, however, but too frequently followed by the reaction of the more besetting influences. Often would some good old man of the congregation linger at the porch, that he might have an opportunity of whispering some humble word of comfort or gratulation to his minister, after having heard from his lips some noble and energetic strain of eloquence, which naturally appeared to him to indicate the approach, at least, of better days ; but when he came forth, and stood among them all within sight of his wife's sepulchre, the gloom returned, the enthusiasm vanished from his eyes, the transitory glow deserted his cheek, and the heart sunk again within every kind bosom, when it was seen with how slow and listless steps the unhappy young man paced his way over the broad pavement of tombstones, back towards his solitary dwelling.

There was no one who took a deeper concern in the

visibly melancholy condition of his minister, than old John Maxwell ; and the delicacy with which he testified his feelings was such, as those who have lived among the peasantry of most other countries would not have witnessed without some astonishment. No noisy expressions of sympathy, no well-meant offences against the sacred dignity of sorrow, ever proceeded from him. His quiet looks, his grave and fatherly smiles, his minute acts of kindness would have done honour to a heart refined by all that the more cultivated men are pleased to reckon the most potent instruments of human refinement. He came often to the Manse, but he never came without an errand that might prevent his visit from appearing to be nothing but a visit. At one time he had some slips of sweet-briar, which he wished Mr Blair would permit him to put in the hedge about the garden — at another time, his pockets were full of flower-roots — and a third time, his daughter-in-law had thought the Minister might not have a “ caller egg ” for his breakfast at this time of year ; and she had made a point of it, that he should take a walk over with a basket of them. The minister knew John, and felt all his kindness ; but John returned to his farm, and he to his desolate chamber — where Young’s Night Thoughts, or the Book of Job, lay open on the table, rather, it may be, to be looked at than to be read. While his daughter sat and prattled by him, the soothing influence of young and innocent looks could not fail from time to time to make itself felt ; nay, there wanted not moments when the light voice of infancy had power to chase sorrow almost entirely from a father’s heart. But at night, after Sarah had gone to bed, there was a long interval of unbroken desolation. Often would he permit the fire and candles to go out unnoticed, and sit musing in darkness and in silence, beside the cold hearth that had once been used to shine so brightly beneath the eyes of a light-hearted circle. At other times he would throw open the window, and lean over it for hours and hours, listening to the sulky ravings of the midnight tempest, or watching the pale uncertain stars, as they drifted hither

and thither, like the lights of storm-tost vessels, over the troubled bosom of their lurid and angry sea of clouds.

One evening as John Maxwell, his son, and his son's wife, (for this was the whole of his family then resident with him,) were sitting round the fire together, after the hour of their domestic worship, the conversation happened to turn more seriously, and at greater length than it had ever before done, upon the minister and his unhappy situation. — "Oh! my bairns," said the old man, "what I have seen of poor Mr Adam in his affliction, has often, and very often made me think of the goodness of Providence to all ranks of men, and how equally good and evil are mixed in the cups of all. I was not quite so young as Mr Blair is when my Marion was ta'en from me—but I think I may say, my Marion had been as dear to me as any wife ever was to any husband; and I'm sure when I look back to the time of her death, and think of all that she had been to me, and all that I had been to her, if I may say sae, I cannot think by what means I was strengthened. But now, that I have seen what has come upon our minister, some things that used just then to seem to me among the hardest parts of my lot—I can scarcely help thanking my Maker for these very things, and wishing that Mr Blair were in a way to fall in with the like. Grieved and oppressed as I was, I could not be idle—I could not sit all day in the house with nothing but my book to take me up—I was obliged to rise with the cock and guide the plough—I behoved to mount my horse and ride to the town—I had bargains to make and fulfil—I was a busy man as I had been used to be—when the night came I was wearied, and I could not but sleep. Now, look ye, poor Mr Adam, if it be not on the Sundays and Saturdays, he has seldom any thing to do that he may not put off till a more convenient season. Take my word for it, if he had had two hundred acres on his hand instead of yon poor, starved, useless glebe, Mr Blair would have been a different sort of man ere now, than what he's like to be for many a day yet. But, oh! my bairns, let us never forget that

all these things are ordered from above. Remember who it is that has said, 'Men groan from out the city, and the soul of the wounded crieth out: yet God layeth not folly to them.' Let us all hope that our good minister may soon be himself again. It is a dark Providence to us that has laid him in the dust; but is it not written, 'Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth: therefore, despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty. For HE maketh sore, and bindeth up: he woundeth, and his hands make whole?'"

The young people looked upon each other while the worthy man was speaking in his way, and thoughts crowded over the minds of both, sufficient to prevent them from following his argument to its close. But John himself went to his bed that night, more deeply troubled about his minister than perhaps he had ever yet been; and when he rose in the morning, the same subject was still uppermost in his mind.

It so happened, that John had occasion just about that time to send a dozen or two of kain-fowl into Edinburgh, for the use of Mrs Semple; and, as usual, he had to write a letter to his lady along with the basket which contained them. To write a letter — above all, to write a letter to Lady Semplehaugh, was a matter of no trivial importance with such a man as John Maxwell; therefore, one whole morning was set apart for the concocting of it. In the course of writing and meditating how to write it, it struck John that he might very well fill up a part of the necessary two pages with some account of the state of things at the Manse of Cross-Meikle; and little as he was accustomed to the use of his pen, the simple and sincere feelings of the man were expressed in such a manner, that this portion of his letter did not fail to produce a very strong effect, when it was read by the worthy lady to whom it was addressed. All the time that Mrs Semple was engaged in reading John Maxwell's absurd-looking, three-cornered epistle, she kept saying over and over to herself, in a sort of distinct and audible whisper, "Oh sirs! Oh sirs! poor man, poor man!" — in a way

that indicated to those that were present, and who were intimate with Mrs Semple, the communication of some very distressing and painful piece of intelligence.

About a week after this letter was received in Edinburgh by Mrs Semple of Semplehaugh, little Sarah came into her father's library one forenoon, with a face full of importance, to tell him that the Hamilton carrier had stopped at the Manse, "with a meikle meikle kist frae Edinburgh." The "meikle meikle kist frae Edinburgh," turned out to be a small box, containing a new volume of Sermons by Dr Doddridge; a bundle of the *Idlers*, which were, that winter, in the course of publication in London; an East India *hunch* — six yards of black poplin, with trimmings to suit — and, at the bottom, below all these weightier articles, two letters for Mr Blair, with a copy of one of which we shall presently favour the reader. The epistle which we do not think it quite necessary for us to insert in this place, was addressed in the stiff, but still beautiful, antique hand-writing of Mrs Semple. It contained only the expression of a multitude of good wishes and affectionate inquiries; while it was reserved for a postscript to explain that the poplin was designed for a frock to Sarah Blair, and that the buffalo's hunch was reckoned the best thing in the world for a breakfast relish.

The other letter was in a hand-writing with which Mr Blair had, at one period of his life, been sufficiently familiar, but which he had not had any opportunity of seeing for several years past. It ran as follows: —

"DEAR SIR,

"Having been for near four weeks in Scotland, you may think it very strange that I have not taken an earlier opportunity of saying, what I hope, indeed, I need scarcely say, that I have heard with feelings of the sincerest sorrow, of the great blow with which it has pleased God to visit you, (I may add myself,) and of expressing, at the same time, my hope, that you are and may be strengthened for the supporting thereof. Since we saw

each other last, many, many things have happened which could little have been expected by either of us ; and I believe I may add, that in that time I have had my own full share of the sorrows of this world. I trust your dear little girl is as well as I can wish, and that she is really your comfort, which I am sure she must be.

“ Mrs Semple has been so good as to ask me to spend some time with her at Semplehaugh, and I have accepted of her kind invitation, although, I am sure, there are many things which must render that beautiful part of the country a melancholy quarter for me. But Mr Campbell not being expected home for better than a twelvemonth, and some of my own friends being out of the way, I was really, till Lady Semplehaugh spoke to me, something at a loss where I should be during the summer season now ensuing. Dear Mr Blair, this town is full of gaieties and diversions, from which I can scarcely keep myself quite disengaged, although I was never less disposed for such things. Now it has occurred to me, that perhaps you might bear with the company of an old and sincere friend (though she has been much out of her duty, and is sensible of that, for some time past,) for the six or seven weeks that must pass before the time of Lady Semplehaugh’s removing to the country comes round. If it be perfectly convenient, I shall, therefore, set out for Glasgow next Monday, and be with you at Cross-Meikle on the following day ; but if there be any thing to render this visit anywise unacceptable at the present moment, I am sure you know me too well, at least I would fain hope so, to have any scruple about saying so. God bless you, dear Sir, and yours, says your affectionate cousin, and very humble servant,

“ CHARLOTTE CAMPBELL.

“ *Edinburgh, Feb. 3, 1758.*

“ *P.S.* — Direct to me, care of Mrs Martha Bell of Bellstown, Libberton’s Wynd.

“ *To the Rev. Mr ADAM BLAIR, Minister
of the Gospel at Cross-Meikle.*”

CHAPTER V.

MR BLAIR was not a little surprised by the receipt of this letter, and by the intelligence it conveyed. Mrs Campbell, though a very near relation, and, in former times, a most intimate friend and companion of his late wife, had not exchanged any sort of communication with him, or any part of his family, for nearly nine years, and having heard of her some time before as being permanently resident in the Low Countries, he had given up, in a great measure, any notion of ever seeing, or even hearing, from her any more. At times, indeed, during the fatal illness of his wife, it had occurred to him how much both he and she might have been the better of having under their roof some such active, and affectionate, and cheerful inmate as Charlotte Bell was when she spent some three months with them at Cross-Meikle in the first year of their marriage. But various circumstances had occurred in the intervening space, which prevented him from ever wishing seriously for the return of Charlotte herself to the domestic circle, of which she had then formed the life and the ornament. At the same time, after all that passed, he could not now see once more her well-known hand-writing, without having many kindly feelings again called up in his mind—and after thinking over the matter a great part of the night, the result was, that Mr Blair felt some pain in the idea of being disturbed by the presence of any six-weeks visiter whatever, but was, upon the whole, as much disposed to receive such a visit from Mrs Campbell, as from any other person of her sex who happened to occur to his recollection; besides, the letter was received on Friday, and as the lady was to leave Edinburgh on Monday morning, there was no time left for any farther epistolary communication on the subject. That she would arrive at Cross-Meikle, on the day she had men-

tioned, was, therefore, certain ; and Mr Blair's only business was to prepare his house and himself, as well as circumstances would permit, for her reception.

But the reader may naturally expect that we should explain some of these hasty allusions, by giving a slight sketch of Mrs Campbell and her history. And we have no objections to do so, but it must be as briefly as possible.

Charlotte Bell, then, was the daughter of a grave and much respected Clerk to the Signet, a maternal uncle of the late Mrs Blair—in whose house Isabel Gray (for that was her maiden name) had spent two or three winters at the time when Adam Blair was prosecuting his studies at the College of Edinburgh. It was in Mr Bell's house that Adam was first introduced to Isabel Gray, and it was not long until the passion which afterwards united these young people for life, betrayed itself sufficiently to the lynx eyes of the crafty old writer. His daughter, however, (for such things *may* occur, even among women, when they are very young,) did not for some time quite make up her mind whether Mr Blair's attentions were meant for herself or for her cousin ; and I believe few people who knew the family, and were accustomed to see them all together, had much doubt but that the handsome young theologian might have made a pretty easy prize of either of the fair kinswomen he might have chosen to woo. It is not impossible, therefore, that Miss Charlotte felt some momentary touch of disappointment when the true object of his fancy was first discovered ; but she was a warm-hearted, high-spirited girl ;—and if such were really the case, it could be no wonder that she should have had either generosity enough altogether to dismiss, or pride enough altogether to conceal, her less genial feelings, on an occasion in every other point of view so well calculated to give pleasure to a girl of her years.

She became the friend and confidante of these lovers. During the happy days of courtship she sat beside them, smiling with the innocent waggishness of a kind sister.

She acted as bridesmaid at the wedding, and, as has already been said, took up her abode for some of the first months of their married life beneath the humble and cheerful roof of the Manse of Cross-Meikle. Frank and open in her manners — candid, even to a fault, it may be — cordial, affectionate, light of heart, and buoyant in spirits, and unwearied in glee — the beautiful black-eyed Charlotte Bell was, in those merry days, the delight of every body that saw her —

Friends in all the old she met, and lovers in the young.

Whoever knew her then, would have been sorry to think it possible that she should be any thing but a happy wife and mother in her time ; but such was not the destiny that awaited Charlotte Bell.

On returning to Edinburgh, from her visit to the family at Cross-Meikle, she found that her father had been so fortunate as to increase his clientage very considerably during the summer, and had begun to be and to seem a greater man than heretofore. Several new rows of green boxes — those external symptoms of a Scottish attorney's prosperity — had been added to the furniture of his business room, and the appearance of the other part of the house had been a good deal improved at the same time. Mr Bell entertained more company, and lived, in short, in much better style than he had been used to do ; and Miss Charlotte was nothing loth to lend a helping hand in doing all the honours of a now flourishing establishment. Nobody was more admired that winter in the northern metropolis than the charming Miss Bell, the accomplished heiress-apparent of all this old writer's wealth. Young writers thought of partnership — young advocates of fees — many thought of the black eyes, and more of the rich succession ; and the old ladies laid wagers of ribbons and gloves, that Charlotte would change her name ere the season came to an end.

Among the young men who had dangled for several gay weeks in her train, was one so young, that everybody but herself thought and spoke of him as a boy.

He was English, and of good family, and had been sent to Edinburgh for a winter, by way of putting off the time until there should be rooms vacant for his accommodation at Trinity, Cambridge — on the books of which college his name had already been entered. This young gentleman fell in love with Miss Bell ; and although, when he first told her so, she was inclined to laugh at him — for in truth he was very young — the end of it was, that he prevailed upon her to elope with him one night, at the conclusion of a very pleasant, quiet, little ball, which had exhibited every charm that any ball can exhibit, and, among the rest, a capital supper, served up with plenty of mulled sherry, about two o'clock in the morning, — the said supper constituting, in the opinion of some present, though the last, not the least, among the ball's claims to approbation. An hour or two had elapsed before Mr Bell learned what had happened, and the raging sire was in hot pursuit on the Carlisle road, not many minutes afterwards. On reaching the second stage, however, his progress was arrested by means of a very clever expedient, the imagination of which was entirely Miss Charlotte's. That young lady, finding just eight horses in the stable, had clapt four of them to her chaise, and made a couple of post-boys ride on to Hawick before her with the rest of the cattle. Mr Bell stormed like a fury when he discovered the state of things consequent upon this ingenious device ; but no fresh horses were to be had for love or money, within several miles of the inn, and those he had been travelling with were entirely done up. The Clerk to the Signet therefore gave up the quest of his romantic damsel, ate a hearty breakfast, and returned very leisurely to Edinburgh, where he next day exhibited in public a composure of face and manner that greatly astonished many of his acquaintances, displeased some of them, and gratified a few.

The mystery was explained very satisfactorily about a week afterwards, when it became known that Mr Bell had invited a party of friends to dinner, and introduced to them a comely body who did the honours of his table,

by the style and title of Mrs Bell the second — His acquaintance with this person, and indeed his intimacy with her, were at the same time announced to be of some little standing, by the appearance of three or four pretty boys and girls, who addressed the lady at the head of the table as mamma, and bestowed a name of equal tenderness upon the respectable senior at the foot of it. At this party, although most people could not help connecting it in some measure with Miss Charlotte's elopement, no allusion whatever was made to that distressing occurrence. On the contrary, nobody mentioned either Mr Beauchamp Arden or his lady, more than if there had never been any such persons in the world; and here is a circumstance which does, I think, very great honour to the delicacy and politeness of the jolly-faced bachelors and heart-whole widowers, who that day surrounded Mr Bell's "festive board."

Mr and Mrs Beauchamp Arden, by the time this dinner took place in the Lawn-Market, had spent five days in the then unhackneyed fairy-land of the Cumberland lakes, and become as heartily weary of the sight of the real meres and mountains as the keenest anti-laker of our own day has of the sound of their names. They skirted Furness, crossed the sands to Lancaster, regained the great road, and were soon in the heart of London. Noise, tumult, glare, produced on Charlotte the same sort of effect which, when visible in the demeanour of a masculine being, is sometimes by the malicious attributed to the influence of champagne, and for three weeks once more she thought herself the happiest woman in the world. But at the end of the month, several new and not less melancholy facts were forced upon her knowledge.

First, Mr Arden's father had announced his resolution never to give his son a shilling unless he got rid of the Scotch Bourgeoise, who had been cunning enough to take him in. [Old Bell, by the way, had written to old Arden in a strain of high indignation about the marriage; but this only made matters worse, by convincing him

more thoroughly than ever that the W. S. had his finger in the pye.]

Secondly, Mr Beauchamp Arden had confessed that, both of the fathers being thus intractable, he saw no feasible prospect of being able to raise the wind for himself.

Thirdly, Mr Beauchamp Arden's handsome countenance was capable of expressing some feelings, the appearance of which was far from adding to its comeliness ; and fourthly and lastly, the gay lady *sometimes* doubted, when she looked back to the careless gaiety, and ease, and abundance of her father's house, whether, after all, *Charlotte Bell* might not raise a spirit as well as *Charlotte Arden*.

Several months of mingled ennui and care terminated in an unexpected catastrophe. Mr Beauchamp Arden was missed at home, and his wife discovered, after a very painful search and investigation, that a certain Signora Boracci, one of the *prima donnas* of the Opera, had been so kind as to give him a seat in the corner of her carriage to Paris.

The first rage of Charlotte nobody need attempt to describe ; but the affliction of a lovely woman is seldom left without the offer, at least, of consolation, and the deserted Mrs Arden did not always sigh in solitude. At the end of some eighteen or twenty months, Mrs Arden's beautiful face was seen as beautiful as ever upon the streets of Edinburgh. But let it not be imagined that she had gone thither for the sake of soliciting the lost favour of her father : Charlotte had a spirit above that. Her true attraction to Scotland was that excellent institution the Commissary Court — an institution to which many have been, and more have wished to be, obliged in our own time. From that semi-reverend judicature Mrs Arden soon procured a sentence of divorce against the swain of the Boracci, and the same day on which that sentence was signed, the hated name of Arden was dropped for ever. It made way for an appellation as ancient, and more noble ; for Charlotte was forthwith

announced in the Caledonian Mercury, as having bestowed her fair hand upon one of that numerous division of the human species which may be shortly and accurately described as answering to the name of Captain Campbell.

The Captain Campbell of Charlotte was, in almost every respect, unlike the curly-headed boy who had preceded him in her good graces. He was a thick made, square-built, sturdy Highlander, with what are commonly called heather-legs, (*Anglice* bandy). His nose had been blown up a little by snuff or brandy, or both ; his eyes were keen grey ; his eye-brows bristly red ; his bob-major dressed *à merveille* ; and his Dutch uniform as fine as fivepence.

Captain Campbell, being the second son of one of the first families in Argyll, had, of course, begun the world with a pair of bare legs, and ten guineas. He had entered into the service of their High Mightinesses, and risen by degrees to the high rank (that of Lieutenant) which he now occupied. Nevertheless, in the course of some West India services, the shrewd man of Morven had contrived to feather his nest ; and if the possession of several thousand pounds entitles a military man to style himself Captain, there is every reason to believe that his proper designation, as well as his usual one, was Captain Campbell. With money in his purse, the gallant hero had returned to Britain for the double purpose of providing himself with a wife and an estate. He was introduced to Mrs Arden at a gay party in Kensington Gardens. He heard all her long and touching story in a romantic hour, among

“ woods and alleys green,”

and the result was, that Captain Campbell and Mrs B. Arden set off, in the course of a week or two, for Scotland, and remained in Edinburgh together, until the above-mentioned interlocutor of the Consistorial Court of that legal city was pronounced and ratified *more solenni*.

Fortune seemed to smile upon Captain Campbell ; for

he met with an estate to his fancy, about as soon as he had done with a wife to his fancy. A picturesque, rather than profitable domain, on the shores of his own dear Loch-Fine, received the weary conqueror, "*curru descendentem Teutonico*," and he took very solemn possession of a grand castle, containing a parlour, a bed-room, a garret, a closet, and a barn. To this imagined Otranto Mrs Campbell approached with glistening eyes, and a beating heart; while the Captain leaned back in the herring boat, and snuffed pinch on pinch, as who should say, "What think ye of that?"

In three years or less, neither the Captain nor the lady thought any thing about it, except that it was a raw, cold, shell of a house, with not one rational neighbour within thirty miles. Mrs Campbell had seen Garrick, Quin, and Mrs Bellamy; she had been at balls and masquerades, at fashionable places of all sorts, from the circus to the chapel. She languished for the city, and she soon learned to hate Loch-Fine. Forgive her want of taste, for she shared but the defect of Dr Samuel Johnson and Madame de Stael.

The Captain, on his part, saw his money sunk in land, which produced little or no return; and this alone was enough to make his weather-beaten countenance gradually mingle a shade of sulkiness with its original colourings of resolution and firmness. Besides, in the long evenings, charmingly as Mrs Campbell sung, and deliciously as her fair round fingers could touch the strings of the guitar, it was a thing rather to be blamed than wondered at, that the Captain sometimes remembered, with feelings of regret, the jovial mess-room of the Scots regiment, and the good cheer of the Hogan Mogans. Visions of long-smoked pipes, and long emptied bottles, rose up before him in dim and shadowy procession, and Captain Campbell paid a touching tribute to the sensibility of his nature, when he requested to have his respectable name put once more on the full-pay list of the distinguished corps to which he belonged. To be brief, Mr and Mrs Campbell had gone over to Holland, and joined the gallant Scots

at Dordrecht, where, or whereabouts, they and the regiment had remained for several years in a state of very glorious inaction.

While the Campbells were in Argyllshire, obvious reasons had prevented the Blairs from soliciting the visit, which the Campbells had never offered. Their departure for the continent had all the appearance of being a final one ; and Charlotte, not to mince matters, was suspected of deserving to be forgotten, and was in a fair way to be so, by her friends in Scotland.

The progress of this oblivious disposition was once more interrupted by the personal appearance of the comely Mrs Campbell. On first arriving in Edinburgh, she gave out among those of her ancient friends with whom she was still in the habit of communicating, that she had preceded the Captain, in order to arrange matters in the Highlands for his reception ; and that when he should have joined her, which in the course of a few months she expected him to do, they might both be considered as at last restored for ever to old Scotland. It was at the house of one of those friends that she chanced one evening to meet with Mrs Semple, with whom, on a former occasion, (I allude to her visit at Cross-Meikle,) she had formed some acquaintance. It was natural for Mrs Semple to dwell at great length on the melancholy accounts she had received about Mr Blair, listened to, as she knew herself to be, by a near relation of the wife, whose death had produced an effect of such lasting and profound depression upon that strong and manly mind. It was, at the least, not unnatural for Mrs Campbell to say, after hearing such a story, that she had a great mind to go out to Cross-Meikle, and try to sooth the affliction of her old friend's affectionate husband. And, finally, Mrs Semple could not hear Mrs Campbell talk of going to Cross-Meikle Manse, without taking the opportunity of saying, that she hoped she would be so kind as to spare a week or two to Semplehaugh-House.

The letter which we have already quoted was written by Mrs Campbell on the day immediately following that

on which she had the honour of meeting the Lady of Semplehaugh, and the letter came in the same parcel with that excellent person's presents to the minister and his daughter, simply because, in those days, the letter of a Scottish lady preferred any other method of travelling to that furnished under the provisions of the Post-office-Act.

CHAPTER VI.

WHEN Saturday came, every thing had been duly prepared for Mrs Campbell's reception : the household, long unused to any extraordinary exertions, had exerted themselves with gladness, and all things without and within the Manse of Cross-Meikle had assumed an air of life and occupation, such as for many months they had not been called upon to exhibit. The day itself was one of those bright days which about the middle of April announce the long-looked-for opening of the Scottish spring. The sky was clear blue, with here and there gray drifting clouds that passed and repassed upon the breath of a stirring breeze : the sharp green leaves enlivened once more the hedges about the garden ; the early crocus shewed its blossom ; the air played light and elastic round every freshening branch and bough, and the small birds twittered cheerily once more from the eaves and copses. Mr Blair, as he came forth beneath the brightening honeysuckles that twined around and over the lowly porch of his house, could not resist feeling and partaking for a moment, the genial atmosphere and influences of renovated nature. He stood for some minutes, enjoying the surrounding gladness of all things, and said to himself, " Yes, this is once more a gay spring morning ; well, poor Charlotte will see Cross-Meikle looking just like what it used to do, when we were all younger and happier people than we are now."

The distance from Glasgow is such, that it was natural

for him to expect Mrs Campbell's arrival early ; and after the morning had passed, it was still thought impossible but that she must come before dinner. Dinner was deferred from hour to hour, and at last served up, but still she came not ; and Mr Blair, when he perceived that the twilight was thickening apace, began at last to feel some perplexity, and almost to think that Mrs Campbell would not come that night at all. Little Sarah sat with the cups set forth upon the table before her, and the kettle humming by the fire, while he stood at the window, looking forth every now and then towards the darkened village lane, and listening to the undulations of the breeze, in every sudden rise of which he fancied himself to catch at length the distant rattling of wheels.

The night closed, and all expectations being given up, the family were assembled in the usual manner for the purposes of social devotion. The psalm had been sung, the chapter read, and the prayer commenced, when a carriage stopped at the door of the Manse, unheard and unheeded. Mrs Campbell alighting and entering the house, heard Mr Blair's voice, and immediately comprehended what was going forward. She gently opened the door of the well-known parlour, and stepping in, knelt down beside one of the servants—all so quietly, that Mr Blair, being at the other end of the room, with his back turned towards the door, and occupied with his devotional duty, had not the least suspicion of what had happened.

He continued, therefore, to go on with his prayer as if no stranger had been hearing it ; and perhaps the effect of what he uttered might have been less powerful had he been speaking in the knowledge of her presence. More powerful, under any circumstances, it could scarcely have been ; for his mild, subdued, chastened spirit, poured itself forth in free, unrestrained, gushing earnestness, and all the humble aspirations of the man rose to, and were overshadowed in, the sublimity of his religion. The voice of affliction was retuned in that sacred moment, and trembled with all the fervid eagerness of unbroken

faith, while the affections of a father, a guardian, and a priest, flowed forth all together in one full, soft, and soothing stream of supplication.

He who, after being brought up in a house where the ancient Scottish system of family worship was regularly followed, has wandered abroad in the world, and lived among people ignorant, careless, or scornful of such things; and then, perhaps, returned after a lapse of many years to the paternal fire-side, there to witness once more those old and venerable observances of village piety, the effect of which has probably never entirely departed from his mind, however little their salutary influence might, at times, be visible on the surface of his conversation and his conduct — such a man, and, I am sure, there must be many such, will have no difficulty in sympathizing with the emotions which rose and struggled within Mrs Campbell's heart, while she listened to this evening's service of Cross-Meikle Manse. She, indeed, had not enjoyed the happiness of being born and reared beneath the shade of habitual godliness; but she had, in her early days, been often domesticated for a time in pious families, and above all, she had spent the last of her truly happy summers under the roof of her cousin and Mr Blair. Throughout all the years of wandering that had intervened — amidst her gaieties and revellings, her follies and her frailties, — the picture of those quiet and gladsome summer months had remained — obscured but not obliterated — at the bottom of her heart; and not seldom, when sleep brought the luxury which waking thoughts durst not harbour, had her dreaming fancy recalled all the fresh calmness of that happy and innocent life — the sweet sounds of its Christian psalm, and the grave simplicity of its domestic prayers. In the old romances we have often read of juggling fiends, demons, and sorcerers, being scared in the very moment of temptation or of torture, by some sudden gleam of the moon or stars beaming upon the symbolic cross-hilt of a warrior's sword, or by some casual, or even unconscious ejaculation of the name of

St Denis, or the Virgin. How often may not the too real sorceries of unhallowed pleasure, the fiends of human passion, and the demons of crime, have been arrested or turned aside from their work of evil, by the apparently fortuitous up-springing of some image of ancestral piety within a Scottish mind — a mind astray, but not lost !

Mr Blair rose from his knee, and was made aware of her being in the room, by Sarah pulling his skirts, and saying, "Papa, papa, you're no seeing the lady." He had scarcely time to give more than a look, ere Mrs Campbell had rushed into his arms. He held her back, and gazing upon her once familiar features, altered, as they of course were, in the lapse of ten long years of an eventful history, he could scarcely, for the first moment, believe that it was indeed the same Charlotte whom he had known. He had heard enough of changes in her — and he had witnessed changes enough in every thing about him ; but her image had remained on his memory as it was first imprinted, and it had not occurred to him that he was to see any thing but the same rosy cheeks and sparkling laughing eyes, which all men liked to look upon in the young and virgin days of Charlotte Bell. Instead of that bright personification of maiden loveliness and maiden glee, a pale face met his view — a pale, thoughtful, melancholy face — a faint serious smile struggling upon the surface of a pair of white and quivering lips — cheeks fallen in upon the bone — and soft eyes beaming with irrepressible tears. A thousand, and a thousand thoughts rushed into his mind, and gladly would he have suffered his tears to have their way also, and mingled his whole soul with hers in one agony of lamentation. But eyes were upon him, and he commanded himself. The water stood in his eyes, but was not permitted to overflow the sockets. After a moment, he could say, "God bless you, Charlotte !" in a scarcely faltering voice ; and saluting her like a long-parted brother, he turned to his child, and bade Sarah come near to be kissed by one that must not be reckoned a stranger at Cross-Meikle. Sarah drew

back and blushed, but Mrs Campbell caught her up, and folding her to her bosom, rained a shower of mingled tears and kisses upon the face and neck of the beautiful orphan, who, in her turn, was not slow to weep, for company's sake, although she could have but little understanding of the emotions for the turbulence of which Mrs Campbell had found a vent in tears.

Mr Blair interrupted this passionate scene by desiring the child to conduct Mrs Campbell to her apartment, and went out himself to see that her luggage was properly taken care of. After a little interval, they all met at the supper-table, where a few kind words were said from time to time ; but, on the whole, there was silence. Neither could look at the other without seeing dim eyes ; and although both strove to speak freely, and to seem easy, the struggle was by no means very successfully maintained. As soon as the things had been removed, Mr Blair rose from his seat and said, that he could not think of her sitting up any longer that night, after having gone through so much fatigue. He forgot that Mrs Campbell had travelled but a few miles : but she had no inclination to prolong moments that had already been too painful, or to say any thing that might tend to prolong them.

The room to which Mrs Campbell was conducted was the same which she had occupied when formerly at Cross-Meikle. It had afterwards become the apartment of Mr and Mrs Blair ; and was the same which had remained unoccupied ever since the time of Mrs Blair's death. These circumstances were, of course, unknown to Mrs Campbell ; and it was not likely that any one should communicate them to her immediately on her arrival.

CHAPTER VII.

It was not without a very strange mixture of feelings that Charlotte, when left to her solitude, looked round the little airy bed-chamber, where, in former times, light slumbers and pleasant dreams had so often soothed her maiden pillow. In all respects, the room was exactly as she had left it ten years before. The bed stood on the same spot ; and its white dimity curtains had preserved all the neatness of their appearance, while a cheerful fire-light shewed the walls, still covered with the same little prints and drawings with which she and Isabel had taken so much pleasure in adorning them. A piece of needlework, on which the fingers of them both had been exercised when they were girls at school together in Edinburgh, hung in the centre, over the chimney-piece, and displayed all its fine flowers, and leaves, and hieroglyphical emblems, in their original shapes, though the worsted had become a little tarnished and dimmed in the colouring. The same Bible and Psalm Book lay on the dressing-table, and there was not one tall, long-backed cherry-wood chair in the room but was an old acquaintance. She seated herself, half undressed, in the familiar corner by the fire-place, and gazed round and round her, till her mind was quite bewildered with the long trains of minute images and remembrances that arose one out of another, and flitted like so many dreams over her mind. There is a charm in such reveries that nothing can entirely destroy ; and so, though her musings were melancholy enough in the main, there was a sort of romantic influence mingled in their airy texture, which soothed, in some measure, a heart naturally of great sensibility ; and perhaps it might almost have been said, that excited and exerted memory made up to itself, in the consciousness of its energies, for the substantial gloominess of too many of the objects

which those very energies had recalled from long oblivion.

She rose from her seat in a mood of pensiveness rather than of sorrow, and walked towards the window, which, almost without knowing what she was about, she threw open, and looked out upon one of the finest moonlight nights that ever adorned the most delightful season of the Scottish year. Her half-sickly mind was in a vein for indulging all its fancies; and the first thought that struck her, was to go out and visit the grave of Isabel Gray. She wrapped her dressing-gown about her, and, gathering up her loosened tresses, tied a shawl round her head, and tripped down the stairs as softly as she could. In those days, nobody in the country parts of Scotland ever thought of locking doors and bolting windows at night; so Mrs Campbell found herself in a moment upon the little piece of open turf which lay in front of the Manse, and all this without the least suspicion that her motions could have disturbed one ear in the house.

Charlotte walked rapidly over the green towards the stile by which the inhabitants of the Manse have their easiest and most private access to the churchyard, and found the stile, and every thing about it, quite in their old place and condition. A row of very ancient and gigantic elms and willows skirts on that side the edge of the burial-ground, and her resolution was, it must be owned, a little shaken, when she found herself beneath their broad black shadow; but she looked back, and saw the Manse bright in the moonshine; and perceiving that all was in like manner quite light in the churchyard itself beyond, she plucked up her courage again, and crossed the stile very quickly. Having fairly entered the precincts, she would have been much ashamed of herself to have turned back; and on the whole, she proceeded along the path with steps firmer than perhaps some even of my male readers might have been able to command, if *quite alone*, at such an hour, and in such a situation.

It must be confessed, however, that if any churchyard be likely to be trodden by unhesitating steps at the witching hour of night, it is that into which Mrs Campbell had made her way. Although surrounded, for the most part, with dark and venerable trees, it is in itself an open and spacious place, with nothing gloomy about it, except what no churchyard can be without, — affording free access to the light, which shines as fairly on graves as on cradles, if men will permit it do so. It has nothing of the affected and fantastic gaiety which the romantic damsels of Paris admire in the cemetery of the Pere la Chaise; for although Scottish peasants fear death like other men, they have never had the ingenuity to think of rendering the approach of death less terrible, by associating it with the ideas of hyacinth beds, treil-lages of clematis, and trim thickets of lilac and laburnum. Neither has it the soul-filling majesty of your great old English burial-ground, spread out beneath the shadow of some towering minster — a majesty in the presence of which the fears of human feebleness may sometimes be supposed to shrink into nothing — before which frailty may gain strength from the very sense of littleness. The simple people of Cross-Meikle are contented with humbler images round the resting-place of their forefathers, but it exhibits nothing of that desolate and dismal aspect which we must all, in general, connect with the notions of a Scottish *kirkyard*. The flat tombstones lie in the clear light of sun and moon, and the green sod is refreshed by the visitings of the healthful breezes. Careful eyes watch the receptacles of lowly worth, and no atmosphere of needless desolation oppresses the spirits of those who walk over the ground, beneath which they know they are one day to be laid.

The church itself, which stands near the western limit of the burial-ground, is one of a very few fine old ecclesiastical edifices that are still to be found in the country districts of Scotland. It is a small, but an exquisitely beautiful specimen of the earliest and simplest style of Gothic architecture, having no richness of minute decora-

tion, but perfectly graceful in its outlines, and chaste in its whole effect. The original roof of stone still remains entire, although there is room enough between some shattered layers, for the support of wall-flowers, ivy, and hawthorn bushes, and here and there a little crooked apple-tree has even contrived to find way for its roots, and hangs forth its blossoms and fruit over some projecting groin or parapet. Altogether, in a country where few of those buildings remain otherwise than in a state of ruin, Cross-Meikle Kirk is entitled to be visited with considerable attention. And although, to be sure, such matters were, comparatively speaking, little thought of in the days of Adam Blair, the natural good feelings of the peasantry of that parish had always led them to be not a little proud of their "grand auld Kirk."

It was, as I have already mentioned, close beneath the wall of the church that the Blairs had their burying-place, and Mrs Campbell easily found her way once more to the conspicuous tablet placed above the remains of Mr Blair's father. That was exactly as it had been; but below it, three small heaps of turf disposed in the same line, and one quite new tombstone farther out from the church, indicated the havoc of the ten short years that had passed. Having found what she had come in quest of, Mrs Campbell was in no haste to exhaust its contemplation. She did not try to read the whole of the inscription—She saw, *HERE LIES MRS ISABEL GRAY*—these words were quite enough for her; and she sat down, at once, upon the edge of the large stone, with the composure which awe can lend to sorrow in the immediate presence of the departed. She was not of what is commonly called a superstitious turn of mind;—the buoyancy of her original character and disposition, and the very circumstance of her being where she now was, may sufficiently attest that she was not so; but we are all superstitious, and ideas forced themselves upon her after she had taken her seat on her friend's grave, which she strove to dispel and banish, but with which a stronger mind, in a similar situation, might have struggled as

vainly as hers did. She gazed abroad upon the calm, breathless surface of the field of sepulchres, with eyes which would fain have seen nothing, but which could not for one moment escape from the fascination that fixed them; and she could hear her own heart beat in her bosom amidst a silence, which she shrunk from disturbing even by her breathing. The real stamina of her mind were such, however, that her imagination was able to keep rid of any strong or palpable delusion; and after a little time, she had almost entirely recovered her self-possession.

When she had in some measure done so, there were other thoughts enough that gathered themselves round her, and these of power to dispute even the supremacy of the deep stirrings of human superstition. By degrees, she forgot all the wide dominion of death, and concentrated her imaginations upon the individual stone by which she was sitting. She wept not, however; it was with perfect calmness that she reflected on all the innumerable images and feelings of those long past days, in which Isabel Gray had been the sister of her young bosom. It was not until she had begun to turn from them to the memory of the very different sort of days that had followed; and to retrace, in the presence of her friend's peaceful dust, all the long mingled tissue of her own follies, faults, and sufferings, and troubles, that Charlotte's womanly weakness burst forth in its bitterness, and the voice of repentant misery was heard to pierce the ear of Night, as it brooded over the burial-ground. Sighs and passionate sobs burst together unchecked and unresisted, and the bruised heart poured out all its luxury of tears. — She lifted her eyes to the moon and the stars, and the beautiful heavens, and her eye spake reproachfully to their beauty. "Why, oh why are ye, eternal bright eyes, not shining on my grave — on my repose? Isabel loved, and was loved, and was happy! I loved, and was never loved again! I sought refuge where the foolish seek it, and I found what they find. Oh, why was I not his wife! One year — not ten long blessed

years — would have been enough for me, and I should have slept sweetly where I knew his eyes would every day rest upon my grave ! Ye cold cruel stars, when shall I be laid at rest beneath your beams !”

In the progress of all this Mrs Campbell had so entirely forgotten the recent fears of her situation, that she had uttered several sentences aloud — or, at least, some incoherent ejaculations sufficiently expressive of the thoughts that were labouring in her breast — when she was suddenly arrested in the midst of all these melancholy wanderings of the imagination, by the touch of a hand laid gently upon her shoulder — which, by the way, she had, in her forgetfulness of all immediate things, permitted to become quite bare. She started with a shudder, and then forcing her eyes to look steadily, saw that it was Mr Blair himself who had intruded on her privacy. The first thought which flashed over her brain was, that he had been long there, and heard enough to make him acquainted with things, in regard to which she had never even dreamt it was possible she could do otherwise than carry them unrevealed with her to the grave. But she had strength enough, even at that moment, to gaze steadfastly upon his face, and the innocent mixture of surprise and sorrow depicted on all its features, restored to her, after the lapse of a few silent moments, the possession of something that, for the first time in her life, she had felt the possibility, and almost the pang of losing.

The truth of the matter is, that Mr Blair, on entering his bed-room that night, had felt himself but little inclined to sleep ; for his spirits, as we may easily suppose, had been in no ordinary degree confused and agitated. After going to bed, he had striven to lead his thoughts into some more soothing channel ; but, at last, finding it quite impossible for him to do so without assistance, he had risen again, re-lighted his candle, and taken a book into his bed with him, which he hoped might give a new direction to his ideas, and so prepare him for the needed embrace of sleep. Homer was the book he had happened

to light upon, and his hand had perhaps unconsciously turned over the leaves to that part of the *Odyssey*, in which the interview between Ulysses and his mother's shade, in the nether world, is described with so many exquisite touches of pathos.

There was something in the first lines his eye chanced to rest upon so charming in itself, and, at the same time, so much in unison with the feelings on which his own mind had been dwelling, that although he meant at first to read but for a little while, he had gone on, turning page after page, till he had become completely interested and occupied, and could not think of stopping. The sorrowful, and at the same time calm and grave strain of that inimitable portion of his favourite poem, had therefore been exerting a salutary and composing influence upon his mind, all the time that poor Mrs Campbell was giving way to her own troubled meditations in the room immediately adjoining to his bed-chamber. And having come to the end of the book, he was just about to extinguish his light again, and once more court slumber, when he heard, in the breathless stillness of the hour, a neighbouring door gently opened, and immediately afterwards, the step of a light foot on the stair-case.

His first idea was of little Sarah, for none of his servants slept on that floor; but he knew Sarah's footstep so well, that, after listening a moment, he was satisfied it was not she. He was sure it must be his guest; and when he had ascertained that the person, whoever it was, had left the house, it flashed upon him (for troubled spirits have many sympathies) that Charlotte had gone out to enjoy the fine moonlight night, and sooth herself with the freshness of the air. If of old she might have done so (and she had often done the like) in the mere wantonness of exuberant gaiety or luxury of girlish romance, — why should she not do the same thing now to relieve the bosom of its weight? The end was, that he himself had begun to slip on some of his clothes, while these things were passing over his mind; and that he was very soon out upon the green, where the moon-

light shewed him distinctly on the dewy grass the mark of Charlotte's neat little footsteps. He followed them, and traced them to the stile. There he divined the object of her wandering, and he was in no mood either to disturb her privacy, or to chide her for her yieldingness. He therefore passed the stile, simply from a sort of feeling that it was his duty to watch over Charlotte, and the apprehension that, in her visibly perturbed and shaken state of mind, some foolish little fancy might take hold of her, and perhaps render the assistance of masculine nerves desirable. Beneath the shadow of those great elm-trees, he could linger unobserved, and without interrupting what he had no right to interrupt, be at hand to lend his assistance, in case any assistance should turn out to be required. There was a flutter on his own spirits at the moment, produced, no doubt, by the suddenness and unexpected nature of these little incidents, that prevented him from feeling almost any thing of what even he might probably have felt in that place any other night in the year; yet no man is likely to stand in the black shade of old sighing trees, looking out upon a churchyard at midnight, without some little sensations of unquiet; and he surely, of all men, could have no reason to be ashamed of some such visitings there.

After a few minutes, his eye at last caught a glimpse of Charlotte's figure, where she was sitting on the tombstone. He had come to see Charlotte, and it was *there* he looked to find her. Yet now, when he saw a female form clothed all in white, bent over his wife's grave at that hour, and bent in motionless silence, he might be forgiven for allowing one superstitious dream to heave his bosom for a moment. He gazed and gazed, and was aware of his folly, and shook it from him, or supposed himself to do so. The effect, nevertheless, was such, that he stood quite rooted to the spot, as if he had been fascinated by the presence and vision of something not of this world.

But when Charlotte raised herself up, and, clasping and wringing her hands, made the echoes of all that

desolate place resound with the voice of agony not to be mistaken, a crowd of far different feelings forced themselves into his mind. It was then that Blair stepped forth from the shaded nook in which he had been standing, and walked towards the weeping woman with a firm step over the graves.

But the touch of Blair's hand upon Charlotte's neck, and still more, something already alluded to, had effectually disturbed the tenor of her meditations. "Dear Charlotte," said he, "why is this? Why *here*, and *now*, and *thus*? It is not so that we should receive what God sends, Charlotte. We must struggle, else we cannot overcome." — He said these words calmly, for the sight of another's emotion had nerved him, and she, in her turn, was as calm as if she had undergone nothing of all that fervid agitation. "Adam," said she, "forgive me; I am a poor silly creature." — "Come away, Charlotte," said Blair, "we have been long enough here." And so saying, he drew her cold arm within his, and she leaned all her weight upon it, like one that was faint and weary, but otherwise walked well and firmly by his side. The presence of kindness had not come in vain to sorrow; and when they had reached the Manse, and entered their chambers again, I believe both of them felt the better for all that had happened.

CHAPTER VIII.

It is said by a writer, whose celebrity, perhaps, does no great honour to the feelings of human nature, that, let a man die amidst ever so many lamentations, if he could rise from the grave again after the lapse of a few years, or even months, his re-appearance would not be found to be productive of unmingled satisfaction among the friends who had wept over his closing grave. There is much wickedness in this satirical remark, and certainly a great deal of exaggeration; nevertheless, there is per-

haps some foundation for it in the truth. This much, at least, we must all have observed, that friends who have been long absent from each other, however they may have lamented their separation, do very seldom, on meeting again, experience all that pleasure which they themselves had expected to derive from being restored to the society of each other. The reason I take to be a very simple one; namely, that however close may have been the intimacy of former days, those who come together again after being long asunder, never do come together the same persons that they parted. In spite of every thing, new events have passed over either head; new thoughts, new feelings have left their traces in either bosom: the sorrows of one have not been sympathized with: the joys of another have not been partaken: the mind of each has been occupied, in by far the greater part of its depth, with things of which the other has no knowledge, and can form no guess: and after the first tumult of re-kindled affection is over, the melancholy truth forces itself upon those most reluctant to admit it, that the internal man suffers changes no less surely than the external; and that the mental eye regards remote objects in a way as fallacious as the corporeal. —

*Fallunt nos oculi, vagique sensus
Oppressâ ratione mentiuntur,
Nam turris prope quæ quadrata surgit,
Attritis procul angulis rotatur;*

and, in like manner, he who, being far off, has been thought of as if he had remained what he was ere he went away, no sooner approaches us once more, than we discover how fondly imagination has been playing with the materials of memory. Nay, when there has been room and leisure for a little pause of reflection, the consciousness of changes within one's own mind becomes so strong, that very many men are apt to give their friends, in such a situation, credit for having been changed during the period of absence, in a measure not less but greater than they really have been.

Mr Blair was too good a man either to have many

secrets or many suspicions ; yet the sort of coldness to which these feelings lead all men, was not imperceptible in his demeanour towards his guest, after she had spent a few days under his roof. There were many subjects on which she was evidently unwilling to speak — and, above all, she seemed to labour with great difficulties whenever the natural course of conversation would have led her to speak of the things that had befallen herself during the last years of her absence from Scotland. Mr Blair was not by nature a curious man, but he was so very kind, that this species of reserve could not fail to chill him at times ; and, on the whole, though little occasions were every now and then occurring on which every thing like reserve seemed to be quite forgotten on both sides — these, after all, were but exceptions to a general rule. The painful character of the subjects on which his own meditations chiefly rested, made him feel that open speaking and concealment of nothing, would, on his part, be cruel at the best ; — and Mrs Campbell had, no doubt, her painful thoughts also. Their intercourse, then, was invariably kind and affectionate ; but it was no longer the same thing as when, in early and untroubled days, Adam Blair and Charlotte Bell were used to sit together, like a brother and a sister, in the presence of her who was a sister to the one, and more to the other.

To restore the full confidence of long-broken sympathy, was here, as it probably always is, the work of time and of trifles. Yet nobody who was in the habit of seeing Mr Blair could doubt, that from the date of Mrs Campbell's arrival at Cross-Meikle, his condition had been gradually, but surely tending towards improvement. The obligations inspired by the duties of hospitality had visibly furnished a stimulus to his mind. Society and conversation had exerted their usual influences, and the whole aspect and demeanour of the man had, ere long, lost that shade of undisturbed and settled heaviness, which indicates to the watchful eye of kindness, the sickly luxuries of a spirit wasting all its energies in brooding

over the dark places of remembrance. This, it may be supposed, was more particularly a matter of constant and thankful remark among Mr Blair's worthy country folks. Deeply as they all respected both the man and his affliction, it is not to be denied that some of them had been occasionally inclined to find fault with the extent to which he carried his indulgence of sorrow. The old bedridden peasant, whose solitude had been enlivened, whose faith had been strengthened, whose feelings had all been soothed by the frequent visits of an affectionate minister, felt the comparative rareness of those visits as an additional infliction of calamity ; and sometimes, the natural querulousness of age, and suffering, and desertion, would have its way. Younger people, again, who had met and resisted griefs of the same species with those to which Mr Blair had been exposed, did not all of them think so wisely and so deeply as we have seen John Maxwell did ; but, on the contrary, were apt to consider the leisure and superior information of their minister as reasons why he should have been less likely, than they themselves had been, to give way to the enervating influences of a cherished distress. The arrival of Mrs Campbell was associated by all these people, with the notions of strengthened zeal and discharged duty on the part of Mr Blair ; while such were the frankness of her manners among themselves, her readiness to give all sort of assistance in cases of necessity or of suffering, and the kindness of all her conduct in every situation wherein they had any opportunity of contemplating it, that it would indeed have been very wonderful had the lady not become, which she really did, the greatest possible favourite among these good villagers.

But, perhaps, there was no part of Mrs Campbell's behaviour which tended so much to secure for her the affection of these humble neighbours, as her unwearied attention to little Sarah Blair. In all her walks, in all her visits to their cottages, this child was made her constant companion. Tripping by her side, or clinging to her hand, alike in her moments of glee, and those tinged

with more sobriety, it was evident to every eye, that Sarah's young heart beat once more in that security, which the presence of a mother diffuses over the breast of childhood.

Nor is it to be doubted, that this unwearied kindness to his child, was one of the surest of avenues to the heart of such a father as Mr Blair. Such an appeal to his affectionate dispositions was irresistible ; and was made in the most modest and unaffected manner in the world. I believe an artful woman, who had cared nothing for Sarah, might have easily deceived Mr Blair, by feigning to love her ; but there was no need for feigning here. For the sake of her own innocent beauty alone, the girl would have been dear to Mrs Campbell ; but had Sarah been as plain a child as she really was a lovely one, Charlotte would still have loved her well, because she was the orphan of Isabel Gray, and the child of Blair. Moreover, Charlotte, though twice married, had never been a mother ; and now, in that deep well which nature has placed in every womanly breast — and that, I believe, so deeply, that it can never be exhausted — the sweet waters of motherly affection rose freely at the call. A heart that had not been over-generously dealt withal, was still full of the capacity of tenderness ; and poor Charlotte, whose warmer affections had been but unfortunately placed, felt more delight than she was perhaps aware of, in the idea of pouring out love upon an infant bosom, where there was no reason to fear the influences of those ungrateful passions which had hitherto disappointed or betrayed her ; or which, at least, she blamed for having done so. Sarah, therefore, grew dearer and dearer to her from day to day ; and that affection, which from the first had been a luxury, became much more so as it was returned. Those whose spleen has been boldly stirred up by the probings of calamity, above all, of that worst calamity, human ingratitude, will appreciate the soothing effect of which that long-forgotten luxury of loving and being loved might naturally be productive in such a breast as Mrs Campbell's. The sense of it did in-

deed soften and sooth her in many ways ; but, most of all, by filling, or rather seeming to fill, the place of some other feelings, the existence of which has already been hinted.

One strong sympathy does more for bringing two strongly-feeling minds together, than can ever be effected between minds of the common order, by the most perfect accordance of opinion as to all the matters about which common-place minds are ever busied, — as one breath of the furnace will do more for uniting two pieces of kindred metal, than all the strings and knots in the world. Their common sorrow for the death of Isabel, and their common affection for Sarah, were not long, therefore, in producing feelings of mutual confidence and reliance between Blair and Mrs Campbell, such as could not fail to overpower, in a great measure, those adverse influences, in themselves rather of negative than of positive quality, which have been already described as somewhat checking the genial flow of their intercourse during the first days of their renewed acquaintance.

It is not less true, that there are minds, some of the strongest attachments of which may be ultimately referred, not to original identity, but to original diversity of opinion, if not of character. Perhaps not a few of the attachments which arise between persons of the different sexes may, in one point of view, be considered as falling under this principle more than any other ; but there can at least be no doubt, that it has its share in almost all of them. And it is quite the same in attachments of a less passionate description. The chief friend of the hard-hearted, indomitable Luther, was the mild and gentle Melancthon, who must necessarily have regarded almost every subject in a way totally unlike his. The divine Plato was not so great a favourite with Socrates as his fellow-disciple, the brilliant, headstrong, luxurious Alcibiades. Charles V. preferred Peloux to Alva ; and Samuel Johnson liked James Boswell better than Edmund Burke. Queen Elizabeth's favourites were not

the Raleighs, but the Essexes; and her fairer rival was not ruined for a Surry, but for a Darnley. Madame de Staël married Rocca, not Schlegel. The friendships of such men as Swift and Gay, and Rousseau and Hume, must evidently have originated, in like manner, from circumstances of difference rather than of similarity in feeling and character; and, above all, in opinion. But indeed, Homer, the great master of human nature, has sketched his Achilles and Patroclus quite upon this principle.

Now, there was one great subject on which Mr Blair and Mrs Campbell thought so very differently, that at first sight one might have imagined it alone sufficient to repel them from each other, — I mean that of religion; and yet the discussions to which their differences of opinion as to this matter gave rise, had perhaps more effect in levelling the barriers which at first kept their spirits apart, than even those strong sympathies of the affections, of which I have already spoken. Mrs Campbell had been a wanderer in the world, and an unfortunate one; and although neither the irritations to which her own mind had been exposed, nor the tone of the company into which she had been too often thrown, had been sufficient to banish altogether the original impressions of a mind, trained as Scottish minds were in those days uniformly trained: yet neither of these unfortunate influences had been entirely neutralized by the safeguards she had brought to their first encounter. I do not propose to lead my reader into a theological dissertation; but I may just mention, that Mrs Campbell's own misfortunes, which she still considered as for the most part unmerited, had at times darkened her confidence; and that the light and sarcastic mockeries of heartless men, even although heard at the moment with any thing rather than approbation, had not always failed to leave some traces of their venom behind them. Mrs Campbell was far from being an infidel, — but there were moments in which she could scarcely be said to be a believer; — and

at all times, when she spoke upon topics of a religious nature, expressions escaped her which gave pain to the unsullied purity of Blair's religious feelings.

The pain with which Mr Blair heard the expression of such sentiments from Mrs Campbell was, however, and, indeed, it could not be otherwise, a totally different sort of feeling from the pain with which he should have listened to sentiments in any thing like the same strain from a person of the other sex, and who had enjoyed the advantages of another kind of education. What *she* said seemed to be nothing but what she could not help saying, without being guilty of a species of unworthy dishonesty in the course of conversation with one whom it was plain she regarded as a most sincere and affectionate friend. It was evident that she knew what she said must give him pain, and that she said it with reluctance and pain to herself on that account; but it was not less evident that her soul abhorred the idea of receiving a confidence unmerited, and that she uttered what she did utter simply from her scorn of deceit, or of any thing that might do the work of deceit. Besides, the sources of her delusion were apparent, and the pain created by knowledge of the effect could never be separated from the pity created by knowledge of the cause. Had Mr Blair happened to fall into the society of a sharp-witted, cold-blooded man of the world, capable of throwing out infidel hints and insinuations in the mere wantonness of an unrestrained spirit, and this either in utter scorn of the feelings of others, or in utter indifference to them, I believe there is no man in whom indignation would have risen higher, or who would have expressed his indignation with more withering power than Mr Blair. But this was not an occasion to call forth any of the angry feelings of such a man as he was. A transient pulse of horror was touched the first time the idea flashed upon him of Charlotte Bell having wandered from the faith of her Redeemer; but this was secret; and the only feelings he did not conceal—those of sorrow, regret, and, above all, of gentle pity—were the only ones which

his mild spirit harboured, after that first momentary pang had gone by.

As a man, it was his nature to pity the errors of a woman, and as a priest, it was his duty to amend them; and perhaps the most powerful and salutary stimulant which could have been applied to such a mind as his in such a situation as this, was furnished by the strong sense with which the obligations of this sacred duty rose upon him as he pondered, in his retirement, over the melancholy truth which had thus been forced upon his observation. To soothe the heart that had been visited by so many baleful fevers of passion—to calm and confirm the understanding which had been shaken amidst the tempests of the world—to rebuild the faith that had been shattered—to restore the hopes that had been blighted—and to renew, in all its parts, the healthful tone of a mind which had originally been meant for health, and the happiness of health—these were the objects to which his soul, in the silence of meditation, devoted all her energies, and to which he henceforth applied himself, not, indeed, with any visible demonstration of zeal, but with a quiet and affectionate perseverance much more worthy of himself, and much more likely to secure the attainment of the purpose he had in view. It is not for us to follow Blair into the secret exercises of his sacred calling, nor is it necessary to suggest doubts to the present generation, by telling how the doubts of their forefathers were subdued. It is enough for me to say, that the apparent result was such as never fails to take place when knowledge and faith on the one hand, and ignorance and doubt on the other, meet each other fairly and on fair grounds. The unpretending simplicity with which Mr Blair expounded the subjects that had formed the study of his life, did not lead his pupil (for such she was) to distrust either the depth of his study, or the sincerity of his conviction. Religion is a part of our nature, and Mrs Campbell's nature, with all her faults and errors, was entire in her bosom: her feelings, soothed by the presence of sympathy, and

originally too warm for the purposes of the sceptic, rejoiced in running back into the old channels. Her constant observation of the effects of religion in the person and family, and among the flock of Mr Blair, lent the best of all commentaries to the doctrines she heard explained, and revived gradually all the genial aspirations which, even in her worst days, had never entirely deserted her bosom. Without any exclamations, any professions, any confident declarations, Mr Blair was satisfied that the good work had prospered, surely though slowly, in his hands. If some momentary feelings of exultation, such as man should never feel, might occasionally pass through his mind,—if he thanked his God too rashly, and even then gave not to God all the glory,—the man most unlikely to fall into Blair's errors, will, I take leave to think, be the first and the readiest to excuse them.

Meanwhile, under the influence of new and continued excitements of so many different sorts, and all powerful in their kind, the mental lethargy into which Mr Blair had for a long time sunk, had gradually been shaken off, and the whole outward appearance of the man bore testimony to the alteration which the state of his spirits had been undergoing. Once more the humble hearth of the Manse had resumed its air of sober cheerfulness, and often, after Sarah had retired to her early repose, would Blair and Mrs Campbell sit up hour after hour together, engaged in conversation, which, on whatever subject it turned, had so many charms for both, that neither was willing to think of its termination. The deep and serious subjects to which I have already alluded, paved the way, imperceptibly, for other topics of a nature less solemn indeed, but too profoundly interesting to the one of them not to command the warmest sympathy and attention of the other. Woman, however chilled and reserved by the first sense of strangeness, is, by nature, communicative: it is her fate to lean upon man; and to man she is never slow to tell her griefs, when she is once sure that her griefs are to be listened to, not by the

ear of harshness, nor with the gesture of cavil, but gently, kindly, warmly, as it becomes man ever to listen to woman. The openness of communication which had taken place in regard to one set of subjects, led to a similar openness as to others; and, by degrees, all the long story of Charlotte's miseries—as much, at least, as any woman could tell to any man of such a story—had been told over and over again to Blair, under circumstances which might have rendered a less affecting story sufficiently dangerous to a man less strongly guarded than he was. There is not, nor ever was, a man in the world, having the common feelings of a man, who could have heard such a story with indifference—and Charlotte had all the power to tell it as it ought to have been told. Her eyes were suffused with heaviness and gloom, and her cheek burned, as she narrated the early treacheries of the boy Arden, for it was evident that she could not, without shame of the deepest dye, retrace the folly of her own girlish behaviour—the green enthusiasm which had buoyed her up while she was floating, with her eyes open, to abandonment and scorn—the glowing heart of hearts which she had laid bare to the breath of insult—the confidence which had grown like a gourd, only that, like a gourd, the next day's sun might see it withered to the inmost fibre, and every broad leaf already mouldering into the dust of derision. Her countenance recovered its calmness as she went on, but her voice, although it shook not, sunk as low as ever did the intense whisper of hatred. “I toiled for him,” said she, (it was of Campbell she spoke)—“I toiled for him—I banished myself for his sake—I made myself his drudge, his slave, his victim. I had been bred in abundance, and he was not poor; yet, because he chose it should be so, I lived as if I had never known what plenty was. But what was this? What would I have cared for this, had I been requited with affection? I would have starved myself,—yes, Adam Blair, I would have starved myself, and gladly too, could I have been sure of one kind look—one tender kiss, Adam, when the night closed in upon

my misery. But no — things went on from worse to worse, and to all I submitted. I left Scotland — a weary hateful Scotland it was *then* to me — and I went to Holland, and we were gay, and my husband's face was lighted up, except only when his eyes fell upon mine. Why, why should I tell you the weary tale over again? Suspicion, black, false, detestable suspicion — blacker and falser it was than ever the devils made hell or found it — suspicion, distrust, scorn, — these are the bitter ingredients that have at last made my cup run over. Adam, if I have borne any part of all these last miseries well, it is you I have to thank for doing so. I have breathed more freely since I came back to your shelter: any body else would have refused such shelter to such a creature as me. I have had many faults, but I trust I have never been an ungrateful creature. Pray for me, dear Adam, I have much need of your prayers."

Once more they shed sympathetic tears, and once more they parted.

CHAPTER IX.

PASS over the few short weeks of a spring, which, on the whole, we may call cheerful, since it followed so dark a winter, and imagine to yourselves the beautiful region all around Cross-Meikle, clothed once more in the richness and pomp of summer in "the leafy month of June." The skies are all over bright, dark, sultry blue, without a single cloud; the trees seem to be loaded and bowed down with the luxuriance of their foliage; the shadows lie black beneath them upon the fervid turf; the brook leaves half its rocky channel bare to the sun, but slumbers clear as some large translucent gem within the deep green pool which it never has deserted. All nature pants beneath the sense of her own excessive beauty, and a still low chorus of universal delight is breathed from the surface of all living and inanimate things into the ear of ECHO.

It was on such a day that Blair proposed to Mrs Campbell that they should take Sarah along with them, and walk over to Semplehaugh, to pay their respects to the good old lady, whose arrival, (from accidental circumstances, deferred longer than was usual,) had taken place the day before, and been announced the same evening, by a message of kind inquiries to the inhabitants of the Manse. Mrs Campbell smiled her consent, and the child, bounding with childish glee, was soon ready to run on the way before them, and open every little gate they had to pass, in their walk through the fields, ere they came up to it. They walked slowly, and were sure never to pass a clump of old shady trees, without lingering in the coolness for a few minutes; yet the distance was not great, and it seemed as if they had scarcely begun their journey ere it was ended.

Mrs Semple did not conceal the pleasure she felt in observing the great improvement that had taken place in the external appearance and bearing of Mr Blair, since she parted from him about the beginning of the year. The accounts she had heard of him in the interim, had prepared her for seeing him even thinner, and paler, and graver, than he had been then; and this added not a little to the agreeableness of the surprise with which she saw how it really was with him now. Grave, indeed, he still was; but Adam Blair had never, from a boy, been any other than grave; and if he was somewhat graver now than he had been at the same beautiful season two years before, such slight alterations might easily elude the unscrutinizing eye of Mrs Semple. He was no longer either leaner or paler than he had usually been in former times, and these were matters in regard to which there certainly was much less likelihood of the good old lady's being mistaken. His cheek had recovered all its brown, his nerves seemed to be restrung, his step was firm, his eye had thrown off the cloud beneath which its fires had languished, and the manly comeliness of Blair was as perfect as it ever had been. Indeed, an additional tinge of gravity was not likely to have taken any thing away,

either from the grace of his movements, or from the beauty of that dark and noble cast of countenance.

The change which a few weeks had been sufficient to produce in the appearance of Mrs Campbell, was scarcely less remarkable, although of this, also, Mr Blair had no adequate notion, until his attention was called to it by Mrs Semple. The hollow cheek and dim eye, which struck him so much at their first meeting, had gradually, but very gradually, filled up and brightened under the influence of a quiet, sober life, affectionate society, and innocent occupations; and Mrs Campbell, though she could no longer boast the sylph-like shape, and sparkling maidenly vivacity of Charlotte Bell, was one of the finest women imaginable. Her form, although with somewhat of a matron-like air, had preserved its outline as perfect as it was at bright seventeen;—her full arms were rounded with all that delicate firmness which Albano delighted to represent in his triumphant sea-nymphs;—the clear brown of her cheek had banished its once steady roses, but that did not prevent an occasional flush of crimson from being visible;—if the curls of her hair were not quite so silky and slender, they were darker and richer, and more luxuriant than they ever had been;—and a slight heaviness about the lids, did not diminish the effect of her beautiful black liquid eyes, whenever they ceased to be downcast. It was the fashion of the day to wear two or three long ringlets of hair down on the shoulder, and never did glossier ringlets float upon a fairer bosom than hers. There was an intermixture of pensiveness and natural glee in her aspect and in her manners, which few women could have denied to be singular, and which, I believe, no man would have hesitated to pronounce singularly interesting. Altogether, if Titian had seen Charlotte, he would have made a point of painting her portrait; and his only difficulty would have been, whether to make her a companion to the most radiant of his Ariadnes, or to the most lovely of his Magdalenes.

Dr Muir's daughter, a celebrated rural beauty, and, as

has already been mentioned, something of an heiress to boot, had been spending some weeks in Edinburgh with Mrs Semple, and had returned to the country in her carriage, and the old Doctor was already at Semplehaugh to receive his fair daughter, and conduct her home to Cambuslee. Miss Muir was, at that time, in full possession of all the charms of nineteen ; she had the rosiest of cheeks, the brightest of eyes, and the brownest of curls, and the whole of her smiling face sparkled continually with the conscious exuberance of girlish high spirits. Nevertheless, from the moment that Mrs Campbell entered the room, there was no one, unless perhaps we except the young lady herself and her proud father, who did not acknowledge the presence of superior fascinations. Even Mr Jamieson, the tutor, who had been paying great court to Anne Muir while in Edinburgh, could with difficulty keep his eyes off the beautiful stranger ; — he sat gazing, and gazing, and could scarcely be persuaded that this was the identical Mrs Campbell, whose pale emaciated appearance had struck him so much when he met her two months before in Libberton's Wynd. The young Laird himself was indefatigable in his attentions ; — while the old Lady, who, having no plainish daughter of her own, was always delighted with the sight of a handsome young woman, looked now at Miss Muir, and now at Mrs Campbell, and could not help whispering to Mr Blair : — “ My certie, I think it would have ta'en a' the King's assembly could do to match these twa bonny faces ; but Mrs Campbell's the bonniest of the twa ; — indeed, Mr Adam, she's picket up in an extraordinary manner since she came out to Cross-Meikle. There's no denying that there's something very reviving in the air about this part of the country. Poor thing, I dare say she's been meikle the better of regular hours, and plenty of milk diet. There's nae young body ever thrives in big towns. Oh, sirs ! your racketings and junketings does nobody good but the haberdashery folk and the confectioners.”

Mrs Semple insisted that the whole party should remain

to dinner, saying that Cross-Meikle was but a step off, and that there was a fine early moon to light the Doctor and Miss Muir home to Cambuslee ; and they consented ; for, in truth, there was no one whose invitations it was so difficult to resist as Mrs Semple's. In the meantime, it was proposed, that they should all take a walk in the garden which the good Lady herself had not had an opportunity of visiting since her return, and in which, at all times, a great share of her pleasure lay. From one of the windows of the drawing-room in which they were assembled, a low flight of steps led down to the green mossy terrace which extends all along the back part of the house ; and in a few minutes the whole party were walking beneath the shade of those fine old sycamores which still skirt the edge of that broad walk, and lean their mighty branches far over, shedding their leaves and blossoms right down upon the dark face of the river which winds through the glen a hundred feet below.

The garden itself consisted in those days of a succession of narrow terraces, constructed upon a less precipitous part of the river bank, at the eastern extremity of this shaded walk ; — and, by the way, “it may be doubted,” (as Mr Macleod says in *Ennui*,) whether that old terraced garden, with its connecting flight of steps, its venerable bowers of yew and holly, and its gigantic hedges of beech, was not a finer thing, after all, than the modern garden of Semplehaugh, situated about half a mile from the house, and enclosed within four high brick walls, and much celebrated, for some good ten miles round, by reason of its magnificent succession of hot-houses, and superior flavour of its grapes and pine-apples. In like manner, “it may be doubted,” whether the bank between the river and the old mansion-house has been at all improved, by the processes of levelling, clearing, and smoothing it has undergone, and the substitution of a few occasional patches of laurel and privet, for the rich masses of dark foliage which then waved in the breeze, and threw many a congenial sweep of shadow upon the

deep and silent pools beneath. But these changes were probably considered indispensable at the time when the late Laird had the fortune to become bit with that Gothic fever which seems to be establishing itself as an endemic among us, and conceived the grand idea of concealing the old, irregular, many-windowed mansion of his forefathers, beneath that heavy and elaborate case-work of sculptured free-stone, which has served there, as elsewhere, the double purpose of conferring upon a good old *hall-house* the dignity of a *priory*, and the comfort of a *dungeon*.

It so happened that, for some time in their progress through this old-fashioned garden, Mrs Semple walked between Mr Blair and Mrs Campbell, while Dr Muir, his daughter, the young Laird, and Sarah, moved somewhat in advance before them. The old Lady stopped to examine every bed of flowers, and having plucked a knot of beautiful hyacinths, she gave one or two to Mrs Campbell, and desired Mr Blair to follow Miss Muir, and present her with the remainder of the nosegay. Mr Blair obeyed ; and while he was doing as he had been bidden, Mrs Semple took occasion to entertain Mrs Campbell with a variety of eulogies both on him and on Miss Anne Muir.

“ Oh, Mrs Campbell,” said she, “ what a change has been wrought in our poor friend these few short weeks, since I told you how John Maxwell wrote a hail letter about the melancholy condition he was in ! He was getting his spirits up as well as could have been expected, we all thought, so long as this family continued in the country ; but the dull, cauld, wet winter, kept him in to his Manse, and he had nobody wi’ him to make it the cheerful place it had used to be ; and day after day he was drooping and drooping, till the poor folk round about thought he would just follow the same gate his wife had gane, and never see out the simmer. It was a blessed thought your coming out to him ; every creature that kens him is sensible his restoration is entirely owing to your being with him. O dear, ye’ll maybe think me a heartless woman for what I am going to say ; but, really,

Mrs Campbell, when I think how young he is, and how he sinks in the lonely way that he cannot avoid being in so great a part of every year, it has often occurred to me, that it would be a happy circumstance if he would make up his mind to marry again. Now, this is a thing, Mrs Campbell, that I'm sure ye'll no suspect I would ever have mentioned, be not to such a friend of his and his family as yourself; but the simmer will soon be blawn by again, and ye'll, no doubt, have other duties to attend to, and we'll be back to Edinburgh as usual, and I greatly dread the thought of what may come o'er him when he's left once more to himself. Nay, for that matter, if he once begin to go down again, he'll maybe be worse than ever, after being refreshed and revived, as we may a' see and say he has been, by your kind company. Since I've come upon this topic, my dear Mrs Campbell, I may just as weel speak out my mind at ance. A year will soon have gone past, and I wish from my heart Mr Blair would fancy Annie Muir there; she's been wi' me in the town these eight weeks, and a sweeter-tempered, more cheerful, pleasant, obliging, heartsome lassie, I never met with. I weel ken that nae love can be like a first love; but oh! mem, it's folk's duty to struggle with the evils of our condition; and Mr Blair is not in the same kind of situation that he would have been in, had he been left at the head of a large family, wi' every thing astir round about him. He has naething but yon puir bit lassie, little Sarah, and I'm sure she has as meikle reason as he has to wish for such a change. Annie Muir must be allowed to be a very comely young woman—she's no such a beauty as poor Mrs Blair was at her time of life; (weel I mind her weel-faur'd sonsy face, when she came first to Cross-Meikle;) but she's a bonny lassie—a very bonny lassie; do you no think sae, Mrs Campbell? And I'll take it upon me to say, that the Doctor, honest man, would have no objection to the connection.—Na, hoot, Mrs Campbell, I doubt ye're no heeding what I've been saying. Do you not allow her to be a comely young body?"

"Her? — Whom?" said Charlotte; "Oh, I beg your pardon, ma'am, it was Miss Muir you were speaking of; I beg your pardon a thousand times. I think she's very well — very well indeed. Perhaps, if she had seen a little more of the world, it might have done her air no harm; but considering every thing, I perfectly agree with you. I think Miss Muir is really very well — exceedingly well indeed. I have no doubt she's very much admired in the country."

"Indeed is she," replied the Dowager, rather tartly, "and in the town too, Mrs Campbell. There's young Mr Fairholm the Advocate, he did nothing but dance after her early and late. I'm sure I've often thought his business maun hae been sairly neglected. And what's mair, there was Major Spankie, him that's to be heir to auld Glenspankie, and is very weel to do as it is already. At the last Assembly we were at, I promise you he danced a hornpipe wi' her, forbye a *minuet de la cour*, and a wheen reels after supper. Annie Muir might haud her head high enough, if she were like some folk; but she's a modest lassie, and I am sure she'll never covet ony thing aboon her own proper condition; though, let me tell you, the Doctor has been forty-four years minister of Cambuslee, and Cambuslee's another kind of stipend frae the like of Cross-Meikle here, and he's aye been a quiet-living, canny, careful carle; and, my word, I'se warrant Annie Muir will hae a braw little penny to her tocher, Mrs Campbell. Do you no think now, mem, it would be a very proper connection?"

"No, ma'am," answered Mrs Campbell, her face flushing with sudden crimson, "no, ma'am, I assure you, I think no such matters; and I assure you it is the last proposal I should have expected to hear from one who knows Mr Blair so well as you do. What! marry Adam Blair to the first pair of red cheeks and blue eyes that happen to cross his path, and this, forsooth, because he is alone, and a sufferer from solitude! Would it make *him* feel less solitary to have fifty pretty faces like *that* staring round it, like so many painted Cupids' heads on a picture

frame? I trust Mr Blair knows himself better, and that Miss Muir will lose no time in arranging her affairs, either with Mr Fairholm the Advocate, or young Glen-pankie, or somebody else that will suit her better, and, take my word for it, make her a happier woman in the long run.—Mrs Semple,” she added, in a quieter and more serious tone of voice, “I have seen something of human life in my day, more perhaps than it is good for any woman to see if she can help it; but depend upon it, that if there be one curse that has come to earth as the crow flies, and with all the poisonous steam of hell hot about it, it is that of an ILL-ASSORTED MARRIAGE.”

“An ill-assorted marriage!” quoth the old lady, with an air of great surprise;—“I protest, Mrs Campbell, I cannot pretend just to follow you. You go on, mem, at a wonderful rate when once you begin. One would have supposed that something very horrible had been mentioned, mem. I believe there are few young lairds on Clydeside that would turn up their noses at Annie Muir, in the way that you seem to think the minister of Cross-Meikle should do, mem. Different people have different ways of considering things, mem; but I confess I am something at a loss,—I confess ye dinna just take me with you, Mrs Campbell.”

“It is no matter,” said Charlotte; “and yet,” she continued, after a moment’s pause, “I don’t see why I should not speak my mind as honestly as you have yours. Mr Blair is a man of a strong mind, and of strong feelings. He loved his wife, and how could he do otherwise, when she adored him as she did! and yet even his wife—even my poor dear Isabel—even she perhaps was not what Adam Blair’s wife should have been. His talents are as powerful as his passions. My God—what a lover, what a husband would he not have been, had he fallen in with one moulded, soul as well as heart, in the same cast with himself!”

“Mrs Campbell,” whispered Mrs Semple, “my opinion is, that all this now is nothing but romantic palavers,

My woman, God does not scrimp his creatures of happiness the way you fancy — there could not be a happier couple ——”

She was interrupted by a piercing scream from Mrs Campbell, who instantly rushed from her side, dashed down through among the brushwood which clothed the bank of the stream, and had disappeared from her view before she had the least suspicion of what had taken her away. The old lady followed her steps as nimbly as she could, but it was not an easy matter for her to force her way through the entanglements of the copse, and a minute or two had elapsed ere she gained the brink of the river. A heavy plunge in the water reached her ear before she gained it, and the sudden sense of something terrible was so strong as to prevent her from being able to cry out, although not to arrest her progress. The first object that met her view was a man's hat floating close past her on the surface of the stream, and a hasty glance upwards shewed her, the moment after, Mr Blair struggling deep in the pool with his daughter in his arms, and Mrs Campbell wading rapidly towards them, with her arms stretched out to their utmost extent, and her long black hair already dipping into the water every time she advanced a step farther from the shore. The old lady stood, unable even to utter a single exclamation for help, shaking all over. Her eyes remained fixed on the water, as if by some horrible fascination, and she saw every thing with that sort of painful, helpless, clearness of vision, of which we have all been sensible in a shocking dream. She saw Mr Blair struggling fiercely, encumbered with the load of his child, the child herself sobbing audibly; she saw, that his steps were, every instant, tottering more and more; —and, at last, a plunge and a cry —and, for a moment, they both sunk under the water. The next moment Mrs Campbell had seized Mr Blair by the hair of the head, and was dragging him at the full stretch of her arm, him and his child together, back into the shallow part of the stream; —a mist covered

her eyes, every thing swam before her ; she sunk down upon the turf in a reeling stupor, and remained totally insensible until long after the whole was at an end.

When she awoke from this kind of swoon into which she had fallen, the old lady found herself in the arms of her son, who was sitting on the grass by her side, and laving water upon her face and neck. A little way off, Mr Blair was standing upright, dripping all over from head to foot, while Mrs Campbell, of course equally wet, seemed to be entirely occupied with little Sarah, who was sitting panting at her feet, and sobbing as if her heart would break. Mrs Campbell was on her knees, stooping over the child, soothing and caressing her with whispers and kisses, and apparently quite unconscious either of what she herself had undergone, or of the state in which her exertions had left her person. Her hair, as we have already seen, had been flung loose at the beginning ; — she had lost her shawl, her neck-kerchief, her cap, all the lighter parts of her dress, in the progress of the struggle. Mr Blair, who had stood for a moment with his arms folded upon his breast, as if half bewildered with so many sudden transitions, now fell upon his knees close beside Charlotte and his child, and throwing one arm round each, he drew them both towards his bosom, and began to kiss them alternately, cheek, and brow, and lip, and neck, hastily and passionately, as if ignorant or careless that he was within sight of any one. He paused for a moment, and casting his eyes upwards, ejaculated some brief syllables of thanksgiving — and then stooping again, imprinted a hundred fervid kisses more, until Charlotte, tearing herself out of his embrace, and pushing him away from her, fixed her eyes steadfastly upon his countenance, and began to shake and tremble all over, as if now, for the first time, she had become sensible to the peril through which they had all passed. She gazed and gazed, with suffusing eyes, and pale lips, fixed immovable, as if by some freezing spell, and then flinging herself into his bosom, began to weep, sob, and laugh, in a breath, like a maniac. By slow degrees her agony exhausted itself ;

then, gathering herself up again, she sat with downcast eyes, silent tears pouring over her cheeks, and parting the wet curls from off her forehead with her quivering fingers.

Mrs Semple now drew near, and after whispering something to Dr Muir and her son, about Mrs Campbell's appearance, and the propriety of retiring, and desiring Miss Muir to take little Sarah in her arms, she herself raised Mrs Campbell gently from the ground, and began to lead her along the walk towards the upper part of the garden. At first Mrs Campbell walked rather firmly, leaning partly on Mr Blair, and partly on the old lady, and they were making progress very considerably more than might have been expected. But ere long her limbs seemed to fail altogether, and she would have sunk once more to the ground, had not Blair caught her, and supported her in his arms. He hesitated for a moment; but Mrs Semple motioned to him what he must do, and so he lifted her like a child. She sat in his arms with her flowing ringlets hanging down over his face, and her hands about his neck; and he, feeble as he had seemed but a few moments before, walked with a steady, though not a swift step, beneath his burden.

When they reached the house, they found that beds were already prepared by the directions of Mr Semple, who had run home before the rest of the party. Charlotte and the child were conveyed both into the same apartment, where Mrs Semple and her maids immediately began to undress them, and to chafe their limbs with hot wine, after the most approved fashion in all similar cases. The room was soon darkened, and nobody, but the good dowager herself remained to watch over their repose.

As for Mr Blair, he was soon equipped in a suit of the young squire's clothes; but he did not leave the room in which he had shifted his dress until the great bell had been twice rung; after which he was summoned to dinner more effectually by a visit of the old butler himself.

About two hours might have passed in the interim, and a great part of that time he was observed sitting in the same posture by the window, which, by the way, commanded a fine view of the garden terraces, the bright river far down among the trees, and the waving bank of copsewood on the opposite side of the glen.

CHAPTER X. 、

THERE is always some little awkwardness perceptible in the demeanour of people, when, after partaking in, or even perhaps witnessing, a scene of great excitement, they meet each other for the first time, under circumstances of perfect security and repose. This sort of embarrassment was sufficiently observable even in the good dowager of Semplehaugh and her other guests ; but it was very strikingly so in Mr Blair and Mrs Campbell, when they found themselves together that day in the dining-room.

Perhaps their appearance was much more noticed by the rest of the company, in consequence of their being clad, both of them, in other people's clothes ; and, as it happened, in a style of dress very different from what either of them were accustomed to wear. Mr Blair had put on a suit of Mr Semple's, made in the ordinary fashion of the time ; but, of course, in colour and in every other particular, unlike his own clerical garb. It was a plain suit of brown kerseymere, with but a very slight edging of silver, and it fitted his shape very well ; but this, together with the substitution of a rich lace cravat for a linen stock, was enough to alter him so much, that, I believe, had none of them actually known who he was, he might have passed any one of the party in the streets of Edinburgh or Glasgow without any great risk of being recognized for the minister of Cross-Meikle. Mrs Campbell, on the other hand, after bursting one or two pairs of silk sleeves for Miss Muir, had been compelled to con-

tent herself with what the wardrobe of the dowager afforded, and you may believe that she began to rummage among the drawers that were laid open for her inspection, with very slender hopes of finding any thing quite worthy of her wearing. After turning over an infinitude of black and grey dresses, she had recourse to an enormous chest, in which Mrs Semple kept those articles of gayer attire, the use of which she had discontinued ever since the death of her husband : (for in those days, the reader must know, Scottish widows and Scottish grandmothers were not a whit ashamed of being dressed like widows and grandmothers :) Here, there was no lack of splendour at least — here was heap on heap, and layer on layer —

“ The velvet, smooth and rich, display'd
Beneath its fret-work of brocade :
The long luxurious fardingale
Of damask dark, or satin pale :
And all on end with silver set,
The thin transparent tabbinet.”

Mrs Campbell's only difficulty was to find something not over conspicuous, (for even then the rage for costly glare in dress had begun to be something on the decline,) and she, in the end, made selection of a petticoat and train of pale green satin, wrought over with silken fleurs-de-lis of the same colour, as the most modest set of garments this repository of discarded finery afforded. Her thick tresses were still too moist for being worn uncovered, and none of Mrs Semple's ancient head-dresses were such as she could venture to display ; so she tied a veil of white lace round her head, in something of the same sort of style which one still sees retained in the costume of the Parisian Grisettes. Nor, on the whole, did this borrowed attire do any very essential injury to Mrs Campbell's appearance ; for the truth is, that it is no easy matter for a young woman to make herself look old by wearing an old woman's habiliments, any more than for an old woman to make herself pass for a girl by dressing herself like one. On the contrary, I believe the general impression of the company was, that although Mrs Campbell

was one of the finest women imaginable, when she arrived at Semplehaugh that day, in the full flush of health and exercise, she was a lovelier creature now, in spite both of the paleness of her face, and the old-fashioned green garb, which, no doubt, tended to make her appear even paler than she was. The effects of the violent agitations she had undergone were visible enough in a sort of flutter of the nerves, which she in vain endeavoured to conceal, and in many little changes of her complexion. For although she kept her eyes very downcast for the most part, whenever she lifted them up and met the glance of any of the gentlemen, a slight blush would just cross her cheek and brow, and then leave them as pale as before—as you may have seen, in some fine winter evening, a snow-covered hill catch and reflect some soft crimson gleam of the setting sun, and then lie, after a moment, as white as ever against the sky. They, however, suspected the cause of her confusion, and they were polite enough to do all they could to spare it; Mr Blair alone was either less knowing, or less well-bred, than the rest, for he could scarcely keep his eye off her for a moment, although every time her eyes met his, her look grew more downcast, and her blush deeper in its glow. But, to say the truth, Mr Blair himself had almost as much the look of embarrassment as the lady. Like her, he felt himself a stranger in a strange garb; and although he was naturally a graceful man in his demeanour, and would have become any dress well had he been accustomed to it, it is not to be denied, that the sight of a clergyman evidently ill at ease in a lay attire, produced an occasional smile, which was by no means the likeliest thing in the whole world to restore what part of his self-possession had been lost or shaken. Besides, whatever other causes of confusion had influenced Mrs Campbell's mind, we may fairly imagine that they might also be, in some degree, partaken on this occasion by Mr Blair.

The old lady, with all her disposition for talking, had *tact* enough to feel that she would be doing nobody a

service by introducing the subject of the morning's accident. She kept off it, therefore, and, indeed, gave it the go-by rather sharply, when it was once slightly broached by Miss Anne Muir. But the old Doctor, who was deafish, and never more so than when he disapproved of what was said, would not understand any of Mrs Semple's considerate hints, and kept up, during the greater part of dinner, a sort of running under-chorus of remarks and interrogations, and exclamations, every one of which added something to the painful state of Mrs Campbell's sensations. The great praises he lavished on herself were, above all, extremely disagreeable to her; and, upon the whole, I believe no lady was ever more glad to leave a dinner-table set in a roar by a party of jolly sportsmen, in the incipient glories of inebriety, than she was to quit that respectable board, surrounded as it was by as sober and decent a company as could well have been brought together in the same room. And, indeed, so intent was the worthy old Doctor on his theme, that I suspect the lady might have found it almost as difficult a matter to escape from his *prose*, as ever any poor stunned damsel did to get away from the melodious verse of "Bright god Cupid," or "Little Frank was belabouring a broken-down hack," — or

"At five in the morning, by most of the clocks,
We rode from Kilruddery in quest of a fox."

Mrs Semple, however, very luckily for her, was one of those ladies who would have thought it about as strange a thing to witness two circulations of the bottle after the cloth was removed, as to see the sun rise and set twice within the four-and-twenty hours. The female part of the company, therefore, withdrew very early; and it was not long after their retiring ere a message was brought to Mr Blair to signify, that Mrs Campbell finding herself not very well, Mrs Semple had ordered the carriage to take her home to Cross-Meikle, and that she would be ready to set off, if he pleased, in a few minutes.

I have said it was not long before this message was whispered into Mr Blair's ear ; but, nevertheless, there had, in the interim, been room enough for the bottle to make its circuit rather more frequently than Mr Blair was much in the habit of witnessing. Mr Semple liked a free glass, as most of the gentlemen of that day did ; and Dr Muir, though he never tasted any thing but simple element when he dined with his family at home, was not a man to take offence at a little occasional relaxation of those very rigid rules of abstemiousness to which he in general conformed. Mr Blair had probably never been touched with liquor in his life, or, at least, not for many years, nor did he drink as much wine now as would have made the smallest impression on most men of his standing ; yet the little he did take, although it caused no visible change in his appearance or manner, was enough, in the state in which his nerves were, to produce a slight degree of internal elevation. The first sensations of awkwardness and embarrassment having gone by, his mind was at leisure to dwell upon the happy termination of the perilous accident which had occurred ; and, the feelings natural at such a moment being heightened by the genial influences of the wine he had swallowed, he was assuredly in a temper for regarding all things about him with the utmost benignity and complaisance, when he stepped into the carriage after his daughter, and the common preserver of his own life and hers.

Mrs Campbell sat in the corner opposite to him, pale, but composed in her aspect ; and the motion of the carriage, and the air together, as they went on, seemed by degrees to refresh and revive her. Sarah, quite recovered from her panic, sat beside them, prattling all the way ; the sun shone bright from the western sky upon the wide beautiful valley ; the noble river winded gently and calmly far below, and a pervading breath of cheerfulness was every where above and around them. There was nothing of the boisterousness of glee ; but I believe they were all in that quietly happy state of mind

to which boisterous glee is as inferior a thing as possible. During the most part of the ride, both Charlotte and Mr Blair kept their eyes on the fine landscape, but every now and then they exchanged silent glances of gratitude and gratulation.

The sun had just disappeared from the edge of the horizon, as they reached Cross-Meikle; and when they left the carriage, every thing was so beautiful in earth and heaven, that neither of them could think of going into the house. A happy woman was little Sarah, when she was desired to go in and prepare matters for serving up tea out of doors, while Mr Blair and Mrs Campbell, without thinking of the odd dresses in which they were arrayed, sat down together in a low garden chair, beneath the ancient and celebrated hawthorn tree, which stands (or stood) in the centre of the little green before the door of the Manse. This was by far the finest thorn in the whole vale, and its beauty had always been a matter of great pride both with Mr Blair and his wife, — and indeed with every body who had lived there. A few dozen yards off, one might easily have taken it for a small oak, it was so round in the head, so dark in the foliage, so straight and massive in the trunk, and so considerable in stature; — but at this time it was in full blossom, indeed so much so, that it had, at a little distance, the appearance of being quite covered with a feathering of snow-flakes. Nothing could be more charming than the perfume exhaled from this fine tree all around it; and every time the breeze passed through the boughs overhead, the richest of odours and of garlands came raining down together upon the place where they were sitting. The fervours of the day had gone by, but the reflected glow that still lingered upon the surface of nature, was sufficient to make them relish the exquisite coolness of a spot which had been all day long sheltered and shaded from the sun's rays; — and so there they sat together, side by side, in silence, enjoying, in a sort of half-languid mood, the calm, and the beauty, and the fragrance, of the lovely evening.

Neither Mr Blair nor Mrs Campbell were aware of any body being near where they were sitting, until they were addressed in a pitiful tone of voice by an old man, clad in very tattered garments, who had walked over the turf towards them, and was now standing but a few paces off, with his head bare, and in an attitude of supplication. Mr Blair was familiar with the faces of almost all the beggars who were used to make their rounds in that district of the country, so that he was a little surprised with finding himself addressed in this manner by a person whom he could not recollect ever having seen before. But there was something in the appearance of the old man which might have commanded some attention, even in a place where mendicants were many and their visits frequent, and which could not therefore fail to procure him kind looks and words in such a region as this — above all, from such people as he was now addressing. There was still lingering about his aspect —

“ Something that spoke of other days,
When trumpets pierced the kindling air,
And the keen eye could firmly gaze
Through battle's crimson glare.”

After he had ended his tale, and received their alms, the old man bowed himself once more on the green before them. “ God bless you, sirs !” said he ; “ God bless you, my bonny lady ! — You and your young goodman will no sit there beneath your auld tree together this bonny gloamin the less pleasantly for having helped a puir body in his need ; no, nor yet when night comes, will ye sleep the less soundly, wi' your head in his bosom, because you have gotten an auld man's blessing wi' you. Be happy, be happy, sirs, while you can. I mind the day when I had a canty wife o' my ain, and a bit garden too, and a bower, and a tree, and a' the lave o't in a puir way ; but that's lang gane by, sirs, and happy as ye be, you'll maybe live to see that there's a dark face of things as weel as a fair one. Good night, my bonny lady, I wish you baith a sweet sleep, and brow

pleasant dreams. Take care ye dinna stay out ower lang, now the sun's gane down."

"Good night, good night, old man," said Mr Blair, rather hastily; and then he added, after a little pause, "we're not man and wife, as ye take us to be, friend,—but we are not the less obliged to you for your good wishes."

"I crave your pardon, sir," said the old soldier, bowing himself very low; "and I crave the bonny lady's pardon—I am sure I meant nae harm; but,"—(and the old man smiled as he spoke,) "but I see I have waukened mair blushes than I should have done, and I'm very sorry if I've said any thing that's disagreeable. But though you're no man and wife now, ye'll maybe be sae ere yon braw thorn shakes down a' its white blossoms; and then ye'll no hae ony leisure to be angry at the auld man's mistake. Good e'en again I wish you both, and God bless you for your kindness."

Mr Blair followed him with his eyes for a minute or two, for there was something or other that made him avoid encountering Mrs Campbell's looks just at that moment. Sarah joined them immediately, however, and then that feeling, whatever it was, passed away. If Charlotte had indeed blushed while the old soldier was speaking, there was no blush upon her cheek now; nay, in truth, she was paler than she had been even during the former part of the afternoon. She sat sipping her tea for a long while in perfect silence, and trifled with the spoon after the cup was empty, not heeding, as it seemed, one word of all that little Sarah prattled at her knee. Mr Blair watched her looks, and perceiving that she shivered once or twice, as if from cold, said, he was afraid she might injure herself by sitting out any later. She rose when he said so, and that so feebly, that it seemed as if she should scarcely be able to walk even the few paces to the door without assistance. He offered his arm, therefore, and he felt her trembling and shivering more than ever, as she leaned upon it across the green. On entering the house, she said, in a faint tone

of voice, "I believe I have really had my nerves shaken a little to-day. I think—I think I had much better go up at once to my own room."—"I think so too," said Mr Blair; "and I hope you will go to bed immediately, and Sarah and I will try to make a glass of white-wine whey for you, and you will be quite well after a sleep."—"Thank you, thank you both," said Mrs Campbell; "but if you will only lend me your arm till I get up stairs, I believe I shall be better without any thing."

She walked up stairs, therefore, still leaning upon his arm, and they had both entered her bed-room before Mr Blair was aware whither she had led him. When he had seated her in the arm-chair by her bed-side, and looked round, and perceived that he was in the forbidden chamber, which he had never entered since the night before his wife's funeral, he started suddenly, as if from a dream, and with one hurried "good night," walked as hastily as his feet could carry him out of the room. He met one of the female servants on the stair, whispered to her that she had better go and attend to Mrs Campbell, and then taking his hat, passed out into the open air, and walked away from the house, without casting one glance behind him.

He did not approach it again until the moon was risen; nor even then did he for some little time enter the Manse. He sat down by himself under the old hawthorn, and continued there, leaning on his elbow, with a very listless air, till one of the servants came out and told him that supper was on the table. Little Sarah had, of course, retired to rest for some time, so that he sat down quite alone, and it was the first evening he had done so ever since Mrs Campbell's arrival at Cross-Meikle. I believe he did not taste any thing but a glass of water; and in the course of a few minutes he was heard going very softly up stairs to his bed-room. His servants were waiting, in the expectation of being summoned, as usual, to prayers; but when they found he had left the parlour for the night, they took it for granted he had been afraid Mrs Campbell might be disturbed.

CHAPTER XI.

It was long ere Mr Blair fell asleep that night, but exhausted nature at last sunk under the burden of reflection ; and, for several hours, he lay buried in slumber as profound as had ever visited his eyelids.

He awoke, sitting bolt-upright in his bed, his hands clenched violently together, his nightcap off, his hair on end, and the sweat standing in big and palpable drops upon his forehead, and the sound of his own screaming voice in his ear. He clasped his brows, and staring wildly about him in the dim chamber, strove instinctively, rather than consciously, to retrace the outlines of what he now felt to be nothing but a dream, although he was still too much agitated with its delusions to be able to enjoy the sense of reality and repose. Every thing, however, as he looked back, seemed to become darkened the moment his mental eye approached it ;—every strong and distinct image seemed to vanish, and leave but a vapour behind it, and it was in vain he endeavoured to make out any consistent or intelligible notion of what had passed—although a sort of confused and distorted “cloudland” of terrible things still continued to lower above the whole surface of his imagination—The black river—the sob of his child—the water gushing into his eyes and ears, and then closing with a rushing sound over his head—the agony of mortal terror—the joy of sudden deliverance—the tears of joy—these had all been with him, and he felt that they had been with him as vividly as during the waking hours of the eventful day before. But other images had followed these, some of them as dark and as terrible, but the whole texture of which seemed now to elude the grasp of his remembrance. He had a sort of obscure sense of having been fighting, wrestling, combating fiercely, hand in hand, with some strong adversary ;—whether he had stood or fallen he

could not tell, but there was such a mixture of the feelings of wrath and sorrow, that this was as nothing :—

“ Fantastic passions ! maddening brawl !
And shame and terror over all !—
Deeds to be hid which were not hid—
Which, all-confused, he could not know
Whether he suffer'd, or he did :—
For all seem'd guilt, remorse, or woe—
His own or others', still the same,
Life-stifling fear—soul-stifling shame.”

What did not diminish, but much strengthen and increase the pain and horror of all this, was, that a sort of voluptuous, languid, sultry air, seemed to hang over the whole mass of the retrospect : Red setting suns—broad, calm, purple skies—mighty trees, loaded with leaves and blossoms—these were the strange accompaniments—strangely jumbled together and ill defined, it is true—of screams and battles, and headlong peril, and blood, and death, and misery. Beautiful women's shapes, smiling eyes, and burning blushes, darted in glimpses here and there from amidst the thickest of tumults. Every thing was waxing every moment obscurer and dimmer, as he gazed back upon it.—He leaped from his bed, flung aside the window-curtains, and the last faint traces seemed to vanish before the first gleam of the open daylight.

He leaned over the window to inhale the morning air, enriched as it came to him through the sweet-briers that clustered all about the window ; and while his eye wandered away over the bright fields, on the face of which every tree had flung its long westward shadow, or rested on the gray sky which was swiftly clearing and kindling into splendour as the sun advanced, the memory not only of his troubled visions from which he had so recently started, but even of the pain they had left behind them, passed far away into the back-ground, and mingled with the thousand and ten thousand dreams that had sent their shadows thither long before from hours both of sleeping and of waking life.

He had continued for a long time in the same posture, and his thoughts were gradually becoming serene, like the face of nature before his eyes ; when, suddenly, he heard the sound of Mrs Campbell's voice. She was singing in a clear and beautiful tone, by herself, at the window of the adjoining apartment. The strength of her voice was such, that he felt she must have perfectly recovered from all the agitation of nerves which had been perceptible in her demeanour on the preceding evening ; indeed, though he had often heard her sing the same song before, it appeared to him that she had never sung it with the same effect. It was the well-known old ballad,

“ The cock proved fause, and untrue he was,
For he crew an hour too soon ;
The lassie thought it day, when she sent her love away,
But it was but a blink of the moon.”

He had heard out the stanza, and was listening quietly for the next, when his servant tapped at the door of his room, and came forward to him with a letter in his hand, which he said had just been brought by a servant from a neighbouring gentleman's seat. Mr Blair broke the seal, which displayed a very comely coat of arms, rather encumbered with excess of quarterings, and found the communication to be from one of the last persons he should have thought of — his old acquaintance Duncan Strahan, now a thriving solicitor in Edinburgh. It ran as follows : —

“ REV. and DEAR SIR,

“ I HAVE come thus far from Edinburgh on my way to your residence, for the purpose of transacting some business with Mrs Campbell of Uigness, who, I understand, has been for some time living in family with you. I should have given Mrs Campbell more timeous notice had it been in my power, but it was only the day before yesterday that I received Uigness his letter, which caused me set off without delay, as the business it concerns is of urgency. Therefore, I hope the blame of arriving so

suddenly will not be laid at my door. Hoping to find all with you well, I remain, Rev. and dear Sir, with esteem, your obedient servant,

“DUNCAN STRAHAN.”

This letter was written on very fine paper gilt at the edges, and in a hand-writing, more particularly the signature, by no means destitute of pretension. These circumstances, together with the heraldic emblems on the seal, and the laconic and somewhat dignified strain of the epistle itself, could not fail to make Mr Blair cast an eye backward to the days when Duncan Strahan spent twelve hours out of the four-and-twenty, on a tall three-legged stool in the most dismal corner of old Mr Monypenny's writing-chamber, and thought himself a fortunate man if he could command cash enough to console the evening of his busy day with a welsh rabbit, and a pint of very small twopenny^{at THE COFFIN IN THE WALL.} “Most wonderful,” quoth he to himself, “most wonderful indeed it is how these Edinburgh writers do thrive!” But part, at least, of this not unnatural, nor, to say the truth, very original exclamation, might have been spared or altered, had Mr Blair known that Duncan Strahan, who received his first pair of shoes and stockings from Mr Monypenny's bounty, and in the sequel rose to be his master's partner only through the continued exercise of great generosity and kindness on the part of that old gentleman, had, about six years before, seen his benefactor's head laid in the grave, and proceeded to shew his respect for his memory by devising and executing a scheme which terminated about two years after in the total ruin of his son and family. Taking advantage of the youth and inexperience of his old patron's representative, he had prevailed on him to consent to some alteration of the terms of the co-partnership, and the upshot was, that “Monypenny and Strahan” soon became one of the firms that had been, while “Duncan Strahan, W.S.” was blazoned in single brightness on door, ledger, and strong-box. Young Monypenny having ere long become food for gun-

powder on the banks of the Rhine, he and his story had, of course, passed speedily together into oblivion ; while Duncan Strahan, ascending gradually, but surely, in the scale of his professional honours, had already become laird of the very acres on which

————— “ The braw bairn
Had of old tended sheep in the county of Nairn ; ”

and begun to regard it as the reverse of improbable that he might end his days in the “ *otium cum dignitate* ” of The Clerks’ Table.

Such was the great man whose arrival was scarcely announced at Cross-Meikle, ere it actually took place. For Mr Blair, not expecting Mr Strahan to come before breakfast, did not think of communicating the intelligence he had received to Mrs Campbell until she should have quitted her bed-chamber ; and, in fact, she had just entered the parlour, and was in the act of perusing the letter in question, when a sharp rattling of wheels was heard in the lane, and forthwith up drove a tolerably smart chariot, containing the important person of Duncan Strahan, W. S.

Duncan had not fed on the fat of the land for ten years, without exhibiting the natural effects of his cheer in his countenance. Instead of a pale, yellow-faced youth, with fustian sleeves, there stepped forth a portly, rosy-faced gentleman, clad in a handsome suit of sables, with lace ruffles, and a neat tie periwig.

He desired the postilion to put up his horses in a voice of great authority, and then approached the door of the Manse with not a little of that condescending air which great men are sometimes good enough to display, when they enter the dwellings of people whom they are pleased to consider as their inferiors.

He was received by Mr Blair with the civility due to old acquaintanceship, although the minister, from observing the countenance of Mrs Campbell, while she was reading the letter, had already formed no slender suspicions that the visit boded little good to her, — and

was therefore far from being gratified with its occurrence. Mrs Campbell, on her part, was so much a woman of the world, as to be able to suppress her own private feelings on such an occasion as this, and she met Strahan's courteous, perhaps even fawning, salutation, with all the apparent ease of a person having no reason either to hope or to fear any thing from his arrival. Breakfast being served up almost immediately, there was no opportunity for entering at once on business, and the meal passed amidst a succession of such common-places as usually fill the room of conversation between people who have been long acquainted with each other, and never dreamed of being friends, — and who meet after years of separation, rather with the feeling that something ought to be said, than with any particular predilection in favour of one topic of table-talk more than another.

The dulnesses of Edinburgh and the Middle Ward of Lanarkshire having been exchanged, and the proper quantity of boiled eggs, oat-meal cakes, and honey-comb consumed, Mr Strahan kept his seat in silence for a few seconds, and then rising, said with a low bow, that he had to crave the honour of a few minutes' conversation in private with Mrs Campbell. "Certainly, oh certainly!" answered the lady, in a tone of great indifference; "I shall fetch my bonnet, and if you please, we may walk round the garden together." Having said so, she tripped out of the room, and returned bonnetted and shawled, although not perhaps quite so quickly as might have been expected from the style of her exit. She had also a long black veil in her hand, and it did not escape Mr Blair's notice, that although this formed no part of her usual walking costume, it had been arranged very deliberately, so as to cover the whole of her face and neck, before she and her attendant had proceeded more than three steps over the green.

Mr Blair followed them with his eyes, until the thick and high beech hedge which surrounded the garden, concealed them from his view. While they continued within sight, their pace was leisurely, and they seemed,

so far as he could judge, to be saying little to each other, and that little without emotion ; — yet, when they had disappeared from his view, he could not help being filled with a sort of heavy presentiment that all was not right, and that Charlotte would not return from that walk so happy as she had begun it. The manner of the Solicitor had been, during the hour of breakfast, smooth of the smoothest, and no syllable had escaped his lips that could be supposed to have any relation to any subject of the painful order. Nevertheless, he had once or twice observed in Strahan's eye, when it happened to rest upon Mrs Campbell, an expression of a mixed sort — an indefinable gaze of conscious power, — and he could not but suppose, of conscious mischief — which had not struck him the less for being followed by the blandest of smiles. In Mrs Campbell's demeanour, on the other hand, cool and indifferent as it had been meant, and as on the whole it appeared to be, there had not escaped him a little occasional flutter — a hasty glance now and then of something between fear and scorn. Altogether, that instinct by which the movements of the stronger passions are detected, in spite of all the art that may be used to conceal them, had done its duty ; and Blair, during the time they remained together in his garden, would have betrayed, had any one been there to notice him, by every gesture of his body, as well as by every motion of his features, a sense of painful perplexity, totally different from, and not in the least to be mistaken for, the common workings of curiosity. He continued a long while walking backwards and forwards in the parlour, and casting an anxious glance from the window every time he passed it. Little Sarah spoke to him over and over again without being able to get any answer from him, more than an indistinct *hem*, or a hasty pat on the head as he walked by her — and, at last, the servants having taken away the breakfast apparatus, the child also had retired, leaving her father alone to the meditations in which he seemed so loth to be disturbed.

Meanwhile, Mr Blair began, as anxious people will do,

to overcalculate the lapse of time. They had not been away ten minutes ere he thought half an hour had passed ; and when half an hour had elapsed, it seemed to him as if the whole day were about to wear away before their return. He opened the parlour door, looked at the clock in the lobby, and re-entered ; walked six or eight times more up and down the room, re-opened the door, re-examined the clock, and again resumed his walk.

In short, his fretfulness was great, and increasing momentarily, when he at last saw Mrs Campbell walking alone towards the house with rapid steps ; and Strahan, who had lingered behind her, leaning with his elbow in a thoughtful attitude, on the garden wicket. He had his fingers instantly on the handle of the door, and was in the act of opening it, when he heard Mrs Campbell run along the passage, and up the stairs, her dress rustling as she moved, so as to shew that she was in great haste. He opened the door more deliberately than he had intended ; and walking forth slowly from the portico, directed his steps towards Mr Strahan, — who on his part, although he was evidently aware of Mr Blair's approach, did not in the least alter his position, but remained as if waiting for him ; and this with an air of the most perfect composure, — except only, that he once or twice bit his lip ; which, after all, might have been a matter of mere habit.

Mr Blair had come within a very few steps of Strahan ere he made any alteration in his leaning posture. He then exchanged it for one of at least equal *nonchalance*. He balanced himself in a careless way on his left foot, his right shuffling back and forwards behind it, thrust both his hands deep into his breeches' pockets, and looking into the clergyman's face, with a smile of the calmest self-complacency, " Mr Blair," said he, " you have really got a very snug little shop here ; upon my honour, Blair, I half envy you your retirement ; a perfect bird's nest of a place ! — By Jove, I don't know but you demure-looking fellows in the country here understand life, after all, as well as your neighbours. — How much may the

thing be worth? — Come now, ha! speak honestly, what may you touch in a fair average year, Blair? A rich country, a very fine rich country this! pray, how long may it be since you had your last augmentation, Blair?”

“Five years come Michaelmas,” answered Adam; “but oh, Mr Strahan,” he proceeded more rapidly, “what’s this that’s going forward? — Nay, you need not put on that look, Mr Strahan. I’m sure you’ve given Mrs Campbell some ill news, and whatever they be, I must e’en hear them. — I got but a glimpse of her face as she passed the window, but that was enough. — What *is* it, Mr Strahan, that you should be so unwilling ——” — “Then you did not speak with Mrs Campbell?” interrupted the Writer; “then she has not informed you of her purpose to set off with me immediately?”

Blair, starting back, said, with a half incredulous wave of his hand, “Set off immediately, Mr Strahan? what? and with *you*?”

“Yes, with *me*, sir,” resumed Strahan, and speaking very quickly indeed; — “with me, sir; and with whom else should she go, when Uigness has sent his commands for her to submit herself entirely to my conduct? — You may stare as much as you please, Mr Blair, but I suppose it is not the first time I have been trusted with as delicate pieces of business as this comes to, even take it at the worst — which I am by no means inclined to do — although, by G—, sir, let me tell you,” and his colour rose as if to set off his oath, “I can’t say that most people would be more likely to put the most charitable construction on things, for having seen what I have seen this morning in the lady — no, nor (damme! why should I not speak it out?) for what I have seen in yourself.”

He ended with a very firm compression of his lips, and pointing his eyes like two darts upon Mr Blair’s face, said, or seemed to say to himself, that he had given the minister his *quietus*. Blair gazed back upon him for a moment or two in silence, and this with an air of such simple surprise, that he began to doubt the penetration of

his own craft. The instant after, however, a deep flush of indignation, or some other fiery passion, rose in Mr Blair's face to the very eyes, and the Writer no doubt mistook what he saw for the livery of shame and guilt, for his countenance immediately relaxed into a grin of superior delight. He whistled a few notes of *Tuttie Tattie*, and then said in a half whisper, "Come, come, Mr Blair, you entirely mistake my intentions. I see how it is, but upon my soul you are safe — perfectly safe, damme! — We're all flesh and blood : a minister's but a man after all, and Charlotte is *un peu passée*, to be sure, but a fine woman still, a fine woman, a very fine woman still, 'pon honour. Damme, don't be afraid, man, snug's the word with Duncan Strahan. I would not expose you, man, although you had kissed half your parish ; cheer up, Blair, we are off immediately, for Campbell gave me no law in the business : she must just put up with the old tower till Uigness comes home, and who can tell but they may come together and be very happy again, once this new suspicion has got time to blow over."

"Sir," said Blair, as pale as marble and as immovable, — "Sir, — Mr Duncan Strahan, — I tell you, sir, your suspicions, or his, or whose soever they be, are false, foul, black as hell! — I call God to witness ——"

It was Sarah that interrupted him. She came, moving as swiftly as her feet would carry her, over the green, and catching her father by the hand, cried, "Papa, Mrs Campbell's up in the room packing her trunk. Come away, papa, and speak to her — Mrs Campbell will no say a word to me."

The moment the child began to speak, Mr Strahan turned upon his heel, and walked into the garden with a firm and deliberate step, whistling to himself as he went. Mr Blair suffered his daughter to lead him towards the house, but made no answer to the innumerable questions she kept putting to him all the way. She kept her hold of his hand, and conducted him up stairs. The door of Mrs Campbell's room was wide open, and he

saw her with her back turned towards him, kneeling on the floor over a large travelling trunk, into which she was flinging gowns, petticoats, linens, in haste and manifest disorder. She did not seem to be aware of their presence, until the child went round and knelt down before her on the other side of the trunk; and then turning suddenly, she shewed a face of steady, glowing scarlet, but filled with such a mixed expression of anger, scorn, and sorrow, as he had never before seen on any set of human features. She looked at him for a moment, and then waving her hand to him to retire, stooped down again to her work with greater pertinacity and zeal than before. He turned away, and as he descended the stair, heard her sobbing bitterly and the child crying.

He remained under the porch for some minutes in a state of much bewilderment, until the carriage was driven round, and drawn up close by where he stood. Strahan issued from the garden the moment he heard it, and walking over the green rapidly, began to talk aloud to the postilion, but avoided even meeting Mr Blair's eyes. The next moment, the servants brought down Mrs Campbell's trunk, and Strahan was busy in helping the man to fasten it behind the carriage. The cords were just tied, when Charlotte herself was heard running down the stair. She stooped and kissed Sarah beneath the porch, and had her foot on the step of the chaise ere Mr Blair caught her hand to assist her in entering it. He would have saluted her, but, though salutes in those days meant nothing but common civility, she drew back her cheek, and pulled her veil over her face ere his lips touched her. She squeezed his hand with hot and trembling fingers, at the same moment sprung into the carriage, and flung herself back in the corner of it. Blair stood in silent confusion, gazing after it. Strahan, uncovering himself, bowed very respectfully, but still without looking Blair in the face, — and, calling out, "To Glasgow, Thomas," — took his place instantly by Charlotte's side.

The horses were turned, and had rattled half way

down the lane, ere Mr Blair took his eyes from off the vacant space which the carriage had filled before the door of his Manse.

CHAPTER XII.

A DEEP shade of gloom continued all that day to linger upon Mr Blair's countenance. He retired immediately to his chamber. Sarah, after a while, dried her tears, and followed him thither ; but she heard her father's voice as if he was speaking earnestly within, and knowing that nobody was in the room with him, she was afraid to open the door. In a few minutes he came forth : he started on seeing the child, kissed her hastily, and without saying a word to her, ran down the stairs and passed into the garden.

He paced for some time, back and forwards with rapid steps, uncovered, in the sun : then entered the house again, and taking his hat and his fishing-rod, walked along the village lane in the direction of the mountain-stream, which not far from thence mixes its waters with the Clyde.

He soon reached the wood of Cartriecraig ; and sitting down on the brink of the shaded bank, began to arrange his fishing tackle. He dropped his line upon the surface of the pool, and kept his eyes fixed upon it, as it floated hither and thither with every creeping motion of the water breeze, amidst the innumerable green and shining insects which were sporting in the cool shade. Any body who had seen him would have said, "There sits a very personification of the *quiet delight* described by old Isaac Walton."

And yet the listless and indolent attitude, and calm face of Mr Blair, were but the mask of a spirit labouring under the fever of as many restless and painful thoughts as could well inhabit together within an innocent bosom. The scorn and wrath with which he had met the first

insinuations of unmerited suspicion had, indeed, subsided ; but the less he thought of himself now, the more was his leisure to think of poor Charlotte, suspected as basely and as foully as himself, and, unlike him, compelled to endure the presence and the power of the very person whose suspicions had insulted her. When he pictured her to himself, sitting all day long, shut up in a carriage with that rude and heartless man, obliged to listen either to his odious sneers, or his more odious flatteries, and prevented by the natural timidity of her sex from saying or doing any thing to defend herself ; or when, looking farther on, he thought of her left all alone in a desolate place, by the sea-side, to brood over the ungenerous treatment with which Campbell had requited her affections, and from weary day to day contrast her situation at Uigness with the kind society she had just abandoned—he could not help being filled with regret, that she should ever have come to Cross-Meikle. But then all the long pleasant walks they had taken together—the interesting conversations which had been held—the conscious restoration of his own mental serenity—the charming, kind looks of Charlotte—and last, not least, her heroic resolution exhibited but the day before—all these images rose again fresh on his memory, and he sighed as he thought within himself how many delightful weeks would have, but for Charlotte, passed on in the same dreariness and desolation with those that had preceded them.

The longer he mused on all that had happened, the more pensive he became, and the more hopeless for poor Charlotte—while as to the rest, he could not help accusing himself of having behaved in a most unmanly and foolish manner, in not having come to some open and distinct explanation with Strahan, ere he suffered Mrs Campbell to quit the protection of his roof. “ Child ! fool ! coward ! ” said he, “ that I am ! what occasion had I to be thrown off my balance by a few words of mean and knavish insult, uttered by a man whom I despised from the moment he entered my house ? What pre-

vented me from making him speak out all he had to say, and compelling him to listen to me fully and leisurely in return? What made me flush into crimson — for I felt my cheek burning — instead of looking at him with the steadfast and unshrinking eye of scornful innocence? What kept me from withering the scoundrel by a single glance? Why did I suffer *her* to endure, for one needless moment, the visible torture under which her spirit writhed as she bade us farewell? Had I acted like a friend, like a man, I might have arrested him in the midst of his vile triumph, I might have forced him to kneel in the dust before the presence of the innocence he had insulted, I might have made him turn away — yes, even *him*, with a blush, a burning blush. Poor Charlotte! she does not blame me, but well might she do so if she knew what a dastard I have been. Poor beautiful Charlotte! alas, what a dark fate seems to hang over the whole of an existence that seems as if it had been formed for happiness! What rivers of tears have been shed by those lovely eyes! How gaily they would have sparkled had she found a tender bosom to recline upon!” A thousand thoughts—sorrowful, affectionate thoughts—floated after each other over his mind as he continued gazing on the face of the water; and he was roused, at last, from a reverie of hours, by the splash which his fishing-rod made in dropping from his fingers into the dark pool far below him.

The abruptness of the bank just there, rendered it necessary for him to make a considerable circuit ere he could reach the edge of the river, and by that time the fishing-rod had drifted far away into the stream. He followed it along the brink from pool to pool, and stream to stream, and at last, after wandering the better part of a mile, he came up just in time to see it enter the smooth glassy current above the small cataract of Craigtrie-fall, and then disappear over the rocks amidst the shower of spray that rises eternally from the boiling basin underneath. He strained his eyes, but could not descry the least fragment on the surface of the wide dark stream,

in which the river rolls on after its fall ; and after staying till his ears were half stunned, and his eyes giddy in his head, he at length bethought him, from the appearance of the heavens, that the day must be well-nigh spent, and began to retrace his way homewards with slow and cheerless steps.

He found Sarah sitting on the turf at the end of the lane which leads to the Manse, and John Maxwell standing beside her. The child sprang up, and ran forward to meet her father as soon as she saw him approaching, while John, taking off his bonnet, said, " Oh, sirs, Mr Adam, ye've gi'en the puir bairn a fright, I trow ! Whare hae you been a' day, sir ? I'm sure it's lang since we've heard of you trying the fishing, and this was a bonny-like day to begin the trade again, when the waters are as clear as a drop in a glass, and there's no a fish would think of risin' that had sense enough to ken its head frae its tail. But ye've left your rod behint you. I dare say ye thought better when ye got to the water-side, and laid it by at Tam Ogilvie's."

Mr Blair told John what had been the fate of the fishing-rod. The old man smiled as he heard him, and said, shaking his head, " Weel, Mr Adam, I'll lay a saumon to a par, that I've read your thoughts for you. It's nae wonder that ye took nae tent to the bit fishing-rod, when ye had sae meikle to think about. I'm sure it's been a wae heart to me to hear the puir bairn — and I dinna doubt ye're amaisht as vexed yoursel as she is wi' the loss o' yon canty cheerfu' face, that did a' body meikle good to see it — to say nothing of you that had mair of her company. Mr Adam, I hope she'll soon be back again amang us. But there's my callant that has been down at Glasgow, has just come hame, and he has brought a letter for you ; he tauld me she gied it to him wi' her ain hand, just as she was setting off for Greenock. She'll be gaun back to the Highlands, I'se warrant — nae doubt her goodman will be some of the Argyll's folk."

John had been fumbling all the time he was speaking

about his great black leather pocket-book, and at length, having succeeded in extricating it from amidst I know not now many Aberdeen almanacks and market-bills, he presented the letter in question to Mr Blair. He received it eagerly; looked for a moment upon the scrawled and blotted address, pressed the seal to his lips, and tore open the envelope. He began to read immediately, but had walked away to some little distance from John and Sarah, ere he came to the end. The letter was as follows:—

“Glasgow, Friday afternoon.

“I CANNOT think, dear Mr Blair, of leaving this town without saying a word on matters which I could not speak of when I was leaving you this morning, and which, perhaps, I could not speak of now, were I restored to the protection of your roof at this moment. Do not suppose that I can think without horror, as well as shame, of the misfortune to which you have been exposed, in consequence of your great and truly Christian kindness to the most unfortunate of women. For me, I have been well used to the misery of distrust and injustice, and any new insult of that sort rather sickens than irritates me, as far as myself am concerned. But when I think of you, and of what I have brought upon you, God knows how unsuspectingly, I cannot find words to express what I feel. It is my consolation that the world will give to you what it has long denied to me, and that the insults of a fool and a knave together, cannot possibly be productive of any lasting injury to you. Mr Strahan, I think, says he informed you that it was his orders to carry me to Uigness—nothing less, it seems, will satisfy Mr Campbell. I once went to Uigness with a light heart, but I left it with a heavy one, and I go back as I left it. One thing comforts me, that when I am there I shall at least be delivered from this base man’s presence. Every word he says, is, in one way or another, an insult to me; but his flattery and fulsome smoothness are far the worst I have to bear with. Dear Mr Blair, I think

it proper to say, that it is my opinion you should see Mr Strahan as soon as possible ; he talks of going to Edinburgh as soon as he has seen me at Uigness, and I really would humbly suggest that you should go into the town on purpose to see him. There is no saying how far such a man may suffer himself to proceed, unless something be done in proper time to stop him. I hope you will soon see him, and I am confident he will be humbled when he hears what you say, more quietly than could be expected even from you this morning.

“ I hope you will write to me, if agreeable, and let me know how my dear little girl is, and how all things continue at dear Cross-Meikle. Dear Cross-Meikle I may well call it, and you may be assured that I shall think, if I may not speak of it. Little did I think, when we were sitting together beneath that beautiful tree — But why should I think of such things? Mr Blair, I am much to be pitied, but I hope I shall be strengthened to bear what bear I must.

“ Your humble and affectionate servant,
“ C. C.”

I have said that Mr Blair had walked to some distance from John Maxwell and his daughter ere he had finished the perusal of this letter. He stood still, and read it over again from beginning to end, thrust it into his bosom, and proceeded straight towards the Manse, without turning round to them. They followed him, and found him seated at the table, where the servants, who had seen him from the window, had already served up the long-deferred meal. Little Sarah took her place opposite to him, and John, who had dined many hours before, stood by the window which looked out upon the green. Mr Blair had been for some minutes eating rapidly, apparently without knowing well what he was swallowing, when John stopped him, by saying that he saw the Semple-haugh coach turning down the lane.

Mrs Semple had taken an evening airing in that direction, with the view of making her inquiries after Mrs

Campbell and little Sarah, who, she supposed, might have caught cold from their wetting of yesterday ; and Dr Muir and his daughter, who had staid all night at Semplehaugh, now accompanied her in her visit to the Manse. It may easily be supposed that they expressed not a little surprise when they found that Mrs Campbell had taken her departure in such a sudden and unexpected manner. Dr Muir threw out several hints, which told pretty plainly that he wished to hear a little more than had been mentioned about the cause of an event so unlooked for ; but Mrs Semple had *tact* enough to perceive that Mr Blair had no inclination to be very communicative on this head, and politely gave the go-by to the subject, by engaging Dr Muir in conversation touching the relative merits of the gooseberry wine of Cross-Meikle, and the liquor of the same denomination manufactured by the fair fingers of Miss Anne at Cambuslee. The Doctor, filling his glass to the brim, discussed that ever grateful theme for some minutes with his usual zeal, but stopped, unlike himself, in the middle of a sentence, on observing that Mr Blair was paying no attention to what he was saying. He rose from the table, and, hearing Mrs Semple say something about the propriety of taking leave, whispered into Blair's ear that he wished to have a moment's talk with him in private, if agreeable, before quitting the Manse.

Mr Blair immediately conducted him into his library, and the Doctor, seating himself in an elbow-chair by the fireside, coughed twice or thrice by way of preparation, and then proceeded to business upon the old rule of *in medias res*. "Mr Adam," said he, "my excellent young friend, Mr Adam, ye'll not, I am very sure, take any thing amiss from an old friend, who means nothing but your good. I see well enough that Mrs Campbell's off-going in this hasty fashion has made every thing look a little dull at Cross-Meikle, and your own face among the rest. Now, look ye, Mr Adam, I hope it's no offence, but I really must say, as a friend and a brother, that I am heartily glad the bonny lady is gone. A bonny lady

she is, and, I hope, a good one, which is better ;—but, —and really Mr Adam, you must not look glum at me for saying it,—there are folk in the world who make no bones to lightly her a little ; and what with her being away from her ain goodman so long, and what with your solitary condition here, I would fain say it as decently as I can, but i'faith man, there was twa or three ill-tongued bodies about the country that had begun to make some bits of jokes about you and her ; and meikle as I despised them and their jokes, we a' ken fu' weel that siclike stories are never tardy travellers ; and, not to mince the matter, I'm just as weel pleased that Mrs Campbell's off and away, which will put an end to all their clishmaclavers. Sae pluck up your heart, my man, and put on your ain face again, and beware o' sinking back into your dumps ; and gang about your work and among your folk as usual, and, take my word for't, ye'll no repent it in the long run.— Oh, man," he continued, in a lower tone of voice, — " Oh, man, I can take my laugh like other folk, and I ken I've been often abused for liking my bit joke better than I should do ; but really, Adam, it makes me sick at the heart to see the cauld-rife fashion this world gangs on in.— Oh, man, this is a puir world, and a heart-broken man has nae want of excuse, if he sometimes thinks to himself that it would be a braw thing to be out o't altogether."

Mr Blair heard the old man out in perfect silence. When he had done speaking, he said to him very seriously, " Dr Muir, I thank you. I perceive what you mean, and I won't be the fool to deny that I do so. God knows, sir, how little I have deserved such suspicions as you allude to. I trust I shall be able to bear this as I have borne other things."

" Spoken like a man," said Dr Muir ; " dinna be angry now, Adam, but I tell you ye've gien me mair pleasure with the twa or three words ye've just been saying than I can weel express. I see it is as I thought, and said, and was sure it was. But there's an awful text says, ' Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he

fall ;' and God forgive me, man, but I am rejoiced to the very heart. Good e'en, good e'en, Mr Adam ; I hope you and your bairn will come ower to Cambuslee, and we'll see what we can do to divert the lassie for a day or twa till she's gotten used to the want of her cousin."

So saying, the old gentleman walked down stairs again, and the evening being already on the decline, the whole of the party were soon on their way back to Semplehaugh.

Mr Blair was left in a strange and perplexed state of mind to muse over the letter he had received from Mrs Campbell ; the friendly and well-meant, but painful communication of Dr Muir ; and the whole of the events from which both of these had originated. He retired earlier than usual to his bed-room, and lay for an hour in the dark, buried in meditation. He tossed from side to side in a fever of doubt and irresolution, viewing and reviewing every thing in every possible point of view ; the end of it was, that he persuaded himself every thing else should be laid aside until he had seen Mr Strahan. Why not pursue him at once, and face him — Yes, face him, in the very presence of his victim ?

Mr Blair got up, and summoned his old serving-man, who had not yet gone to bed, to attend him. James, with the utmost surprise, received his master's command, first, to fetch a light to his bed-chamber, and, secondly, to saddle his horse. He stared with a blank face upon Mr Blair after he had executed the first part of his commission, as if not able to believe in good earnest that his ears had played him no trick as to the second. The command was repeated, and James, shaking his head as he went, proceeded to the stable.

Mr Blair got up immediately, dressed himself, and sat down at his writing-table. He wrote and sealed a letter for Mrs Semple, another for Dr Muir, and a third for Mr Jamieson ; and ere he had finished all this, he heard James walking his horse up and down before the door. He wrapt his cloak about his shoulders, and with his candle in his hand, entered softly, and on tiptoe, the

room in which Sarah slept. He stood for a few moments by the bed-side, gazing on the beautiful creature, as she lay half uncovered before him, and smiling in her sleep. "God bless my orphan child," said he, stooping to kiss her brow; and then left the apartment as silently as he had entered it.

When he came out, James did not assist him to mount his horse without expressing his astonishment at a journey begun at such an hour. Mr Blair made no answer to his interrogations, except that he expected the letters he had left on his table should be delivered before breakfast on the following morning. He then rode off at a leisurely pace, which, however, James could ascertain to be considerably quickened ere the horse's tread was beyond hearing.

The moon was already set, or at least the drifting clouds concealed her, but it was still a fine, bright, star-light night, with a high and whistling wind. The minister of Cross-Meikle, pushing his mare into a good round trot, was soon far beyond the reach of his servant's ears. "He'll be in Glasgow in no time," quoth James to himself, as he shut the door; "I never heard him ride at sic a rate, and at sic an hour too! Good guide us, I'm sure the minister has heard some black news."

CHAPTER XIII.

It is unnecessary to trouble the reader with transcribing the three letters which Mr Blair's servant delivered next morning at Semplehaugh-house, while the family were seated together at the breakfast table. Dr Muir having laid down his with a face of utter astonishment after he had read it, turned to Mrs Semple, and saw on her countenance the expression not of astonishment merely, but of astonishment mingled with regret, sorrow, perhaps something of indignation to boot. He rose from table, and drew the old lady into the deep recess of a window,

too much darkened with heavy and loaded emblazonments to contribute much of light to the apartment. They conversed there in whispers for some minutes, and when they rejoined the party, Mrs Semple's face had recovered its usual benignity of expression, although it was still sufficiently evident that her surprise had not altogether subsided. The carriage was ordered immediately after breakfast. Mrs Semple drove to Cross-Meikle Manse, and made little Sarah dry her tears and accompany her back in it. Dr Muir and his daughter took leave early in the day, and the child found herself established amidst the usual domestic quiet of the household of Semplehaugh, where all her days she had been accustomed to enjoy the ease and the kindness of a second home.

The minister of Cross-Meikle had performed a journey of no inconsiderable extent ere these arrangements took place among the friends he had left behind him.

The first grey light of the dawn found him already several miles below Glasgow, riding at a pace of undiminished celerity close by the river's side. All night long there had been a high wind, and the voice of the breeze, and the perpetual racking of the clouds overhead, had conspired with the murmuring of the great stream rolling near him, to keep up that spring of mental as well as animal excitement, under the influence of which he had quitted his home at the hour of — to all but him — repose. The animal he rode seemed to feel the inspiring breath of the chill atmosphere, and the roar of the winds, amidst the starry and clouded sky, as if in sympathy with his master, and neither horse nor man had ever for a moment paused or flagged. Swiftly he passed through the blackness of the ancient pine woods which here and there skirt the margin of the river. Swiftly he pursued his course over moor and meadow; but more swiftly still when the opening Clyde gleamed broader and broader on the right, beneath the red morning beams, and the mighty mountains of the west rose from among the dispersing mist and haze in which their huge summits had been enveloped. For the last six or seven miles the

path lay along a narrow stripe of sand, which intervenes beneath the river and its high and craggy bank — where the spray now and then rose, and flashed about the horse's hoofs as the tide was gaining rapidly upon the sand. Blair, sitting back firmly in his saddle, kept his eyes fixed vacantly upon the brightening waves, while from time to time his lips uttered an unconscious echo to the hollow sweepings of the breeze among the tall ferns that flung themselves out from the face of those rifted and half impendent rocks.

He reached the bay of Greenock about seven o'clock ; and having put up his horse and swallowed a crust of bread, walked down immediately to the shore to inquire when any vessel or boat was likely to set sail for any part of Lochfine. In those days, no regular packets, (far less steam-boats,) rendered the coasts of those Highland arms of the sea at all times accessible to the traveller ; — but it happened that after some search, Mr Blair discovered a small wherry, the master of which had come to Greenock with a cargo of fish, and said, that although his business was not quite completed, he would, as the gentleman seemed to be in a hurry, oblige him by setting off immediately on his return to Inverary, — provided the gentleman had no objections to remunerate him adequately for any loss he might sustain from departing under such circumstances. Mr Blair was in no mood for being startled with trifles, so a bargain was soon struck ; or rather, an instant assent was given to the by no means over-modest proposals of the skipper. Four stout lads, all clad in the same dark tartans of the Maclachlan, were ere long assembled by the whistle of the master. Blair took his place near the helmsman, who offered him an enormous boat-plaid to wrap himself in ; and the sudden transition he had so lately made, from violent exercise on horseback, to a naked beach and a sharp sea-breeze, might well render this courtesy acceptable.

Covered over with the coarse and thick garment, he reclined himself at all his length upon a layer of chests and barrels, with which the stern part of the boat was

filled ; the sails were hoisted swiftly to receive the favouring gale ; and the small bark was soon dancing gaily over the green and shining billows, while the helmsman began to chaunt, in a hoarse deep voice, one of those rude ancestral ditties with which the strenuous boatmen of the Gael are accustomed to sooth the Genius of the Deep. The younger mariners joined in the chorus, and every slender plank in the bounding wherry seemed to quiver like a human pulse beneath the stirring music of their "*Echinafoam*."

Mr Blair, unused to the motion of a boat at sea, was soon rendered not sick but giddy, by the swiftness with which the keel glanced over the waves. The want of sleep, and the strong circumstances of excitation under which he had performed his land journey, conspired perhaps to make him less capable of resisting what he could not have been expected under any circumstances to resist effectually. His eyes reeled in his head, amidst the countless glitter of the waters ; and he lay in a state of mingled stupor and bewilderment, and not without occasional flashes of a dizzy delight, all the while that they were running right before the wind to the headland of Dunoon.

He recovered by degrees the full possession, but not the tranquillity of his senses, as they coasted the bold and beautiful coast westwards. The rich and verdant Island of Bute on the left, contrasted itself with the bare heathy hills of Argyll on the right, and the sea, locked in on every side between gigantic cliffs and wooded promontories, displayed not the general aspect only, but the smooth and glassy surface of some mighty lake. Calmly and sweetly the heavings of the water bore them onwards ; and Adam Blair, lulled insensibly by the gentle rippling of the transparent waves, and the singing voices of his unwearied boatmen, had passed several hours in deep and refreshing slumber, ere the breeze deserted him, at the mouth of the loch for which their course was bound. He was roused by the bustle of furling the sails, and unshipping the oars ; and saw the wide arm of the sea

gleaming beneath the radiance of a splendid sunset, as it wound away up before him among the black shadows of the mountains.

All around was silent as the grave, except the regular dash of the oars, and now and then some white sea-mew screaming as they passed it, where it floated with the wave — or the far-off cry of the unseen goat, borne shrill over the waters from the echoes of his solitary rock. The near surface of the sea was bright, and the tall yellow crags lashed by the sweeping waves, shone bright through the spray that foamed against them, and tinged the rising and falling sheet of vapour with all their own hues of richness. But Blair sought rather to gaze on the purple hills, which seemed to swell away in interminable succession, ridge beyond ridge, into the heart of the Highland solitudes; or on the remoter wastes of water over which their eternal shadows lay brooding and blackening into deeper and wider gloom, as the last crimson line of sunset kept sinking down lower and lower in the western horizon.

Daylight was all but gone, and the moon had already begun to shine feebly through the fleece of white clouds which rested on the summit of the hills eastward, when, as they were gliding along close to the shore, Mr Blair, who was standing upright in the stern, contemplating the magnificent scene of repose around him, was startled by a laugh, which at the moment sounded to him as if he had heard it before. Casting his eyes upwards on the beach, he saw a horseman on the brink of the rock scarce twenty yards off, and was satisfied that the sound had proceeded from him. The boatmen too rested on their oars, as if in expectation that the stranger would address them; but the moment they paused, he turned his horse's head, and rode some paces in the direction opposite to that in which they had been moving. Blair looked anxiously and keenly; but it was impossible for him to distinguish the person, although he still imagined that he could not have been mistaken in having conceived himself to be acquainted with the voice. The

boatmen, after the pause of a few moments, resumed their labour, and the boat was again in motion. The stranger, hearing the dash of the oars, turned again, repeated his laugh more loudly than before, and then clapping spurs to his horse, vanished among the trees. The boatmen talked earnestly together after he had disappeared from view, but they spoke Gaelic, and Blair of course understood nothing of what they said. He could easily comprehend, however, that they were all of them not a little surprised with being hailed in this fashion by a person who apparently had no wish to say any thing to any of the party. He, on his part, being neither conscious of evil, nor suspicious of evil, soon resumed his cloak and his reclining posture, and dismissed the incident from his thoughts.

The moon had been for some time shining in all her beauty on the waters around them, and his eyes had been feasting on the new loveliness of the landscape under the influence of that softer light, when the helmsman ran the boat under a low reef of black rocks which projected from the shore, and told him, pointing to a solitary tower on the height above, that he had reached the place of his destination. Blair, starting up, paid his fare, and prepared to leave the boat. One of the young sailors leaped up to his middle in the water by the prow, and having taken Mr Blair in his arms as easily as if his weight had been that of a child, waded about a dozen yards with him, and landed him in safety on the beach of Uigness.

Blair sat down on one of the large fragments of gray rock, which lay tumbled on the beach as if they had lain there ever since they had been shattered from the brow of the impending rock by some primeval convulsion of Nature. He gazed after the boat which had conveyed him thither, until it had disappeared from his view behind a low neck of wood-covered land which runs far out into the sea some space farther up, and even then he continued in the same posture, listening to the sound of the oars until their last retreating echo had

quite died upon his ear. It was then that he arose from his seat, and began, though with slow and lingering steps, to ascend the narrow path which the moonbeams shewed him winding up the face of the cliff. Often he paused, and turned round again to the sea, and once or twice he felt as if he would fain follow the boatmen and abandon the object of his voyage at the moment it was within his reach. These, however, were but the passing tremors of a mind somewhat shaken by so many unwonted species of excitement. The purpose for which he had come, he said to himself, was both an honest and a kind one; and why should he fear to act that which he had not feared to plan? He approached, at length, the gate of the tower, and knocked upon it with a firm hand.

No answer was made to him, although he repeated the signal more than once. At last he heard distinctly the opening of a door, and the tread of a foot within the house, and knocked again more loudly than before. Immediately afterwards, a window over his head was drawn up, and he saw a naked arm stretched out, and a weapon of steel flashing bright in the moonlight. "Who is there?" cried a voice,—and he knew the voice to be Charlotte's, although he had never heard it in the same tone before—"Who is there? If you be come back to insult me, to torment me farther, look up, scoundrel, dastard, and see that I am armed. Go, fly, base-born villain, and tempt not too far blood that is already too hot for fear."

Mr Blair was so much astonished at the words he heard Charlotte utter, that he could not, for a moment, say any thing to interrupt them.

"Charlotte," he said, at length, in a calm voice, "in the name of God, what say you? It is I, Charlotte—it is your friend—it is Adam Blair that has come to see you."

She leaned over the window, and, clasping her hands together, lost her hold of the weapon, which fell close to him on the pavement of the court. She screamed aloud

as her eye followed the falling sword, and drew back with a shudder when she saw how nearly it had missed him. A moment after, the bolt was withdrawn; the door sprung open, and Charlotte, rushing out half undressed as she was, had flung her arms round his neck, and buried her face in his bosom, ere he was able either to meet or to reject the proffered embrace.

She drew herself back, gazed upon his face through visible tears, and then again clung to him. "O Adam," said she, "God has heard my prayer — God has not deserted me — but now I was alone — now I have you with me, and I shall fear nothing." She uttered a short convulsive laugh, and added, in a whisper, "No, no, I shall not be afraid of a hundred Mr Strahans now." "Be calm, be calm, dear Charlotte," said Blair, "what have you to fear? what have you to dread? Why should you be thus discomposed? I am here — your friend — your brother is here. I pray you be comforted, be composed, there can no evil befall you. Let us go in," he added, "the night is cold, Charlotte — I shall reproach myself if you be the worse for this." — "The worse for this!" cried she, "the worse for this, Adam! — do you say it is cold? — I feel none — but you shall soon be warm. Come in, come in, Adam." She laid her arm round him, and drew him into the house, and up a dark flight of stairs which led to an upper chamber, in which a single taper was burning faintly. She seated him by the fireside, and immediately began piling up logs of turf and timber above the embers of the hearth: then stooping on her knees, she blew, and the flame was easily excited, and the chamber was filled with the ruddy light. She turned round, seized his hands, rubbed them between hers, and drew his chair nearer to the fire; and then, as if for the first time remembering any thing of herself, hastily ran out of the apartment.

She re-entered after a little time, arrayed in her dressing-gown, the long folds of which swept the floor as she trod, and bearing in her hands a small tray, which she placed on a table, and drew it close to Mr Blair. "Come,

Adam," said she, "you were cold but now, and you must be hungry too. Eat and drink, dear Adam, we shall have time enough for talking and thinking hereafter. Drink," and she poured a large glass from a flask of wine as she spoke, "drink, and I will pledge you, I will pledge you once more—Come, Adam, for your own sake, or for mine."

Mr Blair swallowed the wine she poured for him, and she poured glass after glass, and would take no refusal; and whether from that, or from the great heat of the fire she had kindled, in a room that would at any rate have appeared warm to him, after being so long exposed to the sea-breezes, or from whatever cause, it seemed to him, in a moment, as if he could not breathe without difficulty. He rose and threw open the window of the apartment, and leaned over it to inhale the breeze. She followed him, and laying her hand upon his shoulder, gazed out along with him upon the wide silver lake, stretched out far below, and the glorious moon, which had now risen high in the heavens, and was beaming resplendent amidst all her attendant millions of twinkling stars. While they gazed, a white radiant cloud floated nearer and nearer, and at last gathering over the face of the beautiful planet, blotted her light from heaven. The sky was darkened, and the lake seemed to lie like a sea of ink spread out wide and far, with scarcely one solitary star here and there reflected on its surface. The winds, too, seemed all to have subsided; and, for a moment, earth, sky, and sea, were alike black, and alike silent.

Mrs Campbell took Blair's hand, and withdrew him from the window. She reseated him by the table, poured another glass of wine, and again forcing him to swallow it, began to tell him, in broken syllables, the story of her insults.

Had she never told that story, perhaps Adam Blair had never been a fallen man—nor

"The moon hid her light
From *his* heaven that night."

CHAPTER XIV.

It was morning. There came wafted from afar off the echo of a bell tolling slowly, every note of which seemed to pause upon the surface of the smooth waters over which it was borne. The remote solemn music summoned Christian worshippers from many a lonely glen, and many a boat glided swiftly at its signal from the neighbouring creeks and bays. To one only, of all that listened, those holy sounds, floating gently over the deep, sent no message of peace and gladness. The muffled knell, that announces to the felon the hour of his mortal doom, fell never with a more thrilling sweep of horror than did the simple melody of that Sabbath-bell upon Adam Blair's shrinking ear. — The pulse of human agony was never stirred with a deeper throb.

He clad himself hastily, and without casting more than one hurried glance upon the sleeping partner of his guilt, walked out of the house, and followed, with trembling step, the path which winds up the face of the wooded hill immediately behind it. He turned back when he had reached the rocky summit, looked down once more for a moment upon the shining loch and its magnificent shores, and then rushed with the speed of a maniac into the gloomy and deep glen which sinks beyond. When he stopped, he threw his eyes round him, and saw nothing but a narrow circuit of heathy and stony desolation ; and in the centre of the barren amphitheatre a small dark mountain tarn, the waveless waters of which reflected nothing but the surrounding gloom — and that so truly, that he stood almost on the margin ere he had discovered that there was any thing but heath below him.

This melancholy tarn, formed where three hills descend into the bosom of the earth together, is of such depth that no plummet could ever sound it, and it shelves from

the very brink sheer down into this unfathomable blackness. The sea-mew rests her weary wing there, when driven by the fierce tempest from the breast of ocean ; the wild-deer, that has escaped from the hunters of some distant forest, pants in security on the untrodden heath beside it ; the eagle, sailing far over-head, casts a passing shadow upon its surface ; the stars visit it with their gleams—long before any human eye can distinguish their presence in the heavens from the brow of the neighbouring mountain. But no living thing was near, when Adam Blair took his seat upon one of the great shapeless fragments of stone that here and there gird the heath, and lean their bare masses over those dismal waters—and though the bright sky of noontide hung far above in its beauty, the black mirror below him reflected nothing of its azure.

Blair sat there gazing upon the pool, with his arms folded on his breast, until the multitude of his agonizing thoughts had totally perplexed the clearness both of his mind and of his vision. Once and again he strove to frame his lips to prayer, but the syllables stuck in his throat, and he gasped for breath, as if a great weight had been squeezing in his bosom. At last, he knelt with his forehead low down in his hands upon the stone, and struggled inwardly till every limb of him shook and quivered ; but still no drop of tears would gush from his throbbing eye-lids, no Christian ejaculation would force itself through his dry lips. He felt as if he were wrapt in some black and burning cloud, which would not let in one ray upon his misery of thirst and scorching, and became at last utterly bewildered with a crowd of the most horrible phantasies. Black loathsome creatures seemed to sit close beside him on either hand, polluting the breath ere it reached his nostrils, scowling upon him with faces of devilish glee, pawing upon his head with hot talons, fanning his temples with wiry pinions, which stirred the air, but lent it no coolness. Wide glaring eyes fastened upon him, and held him fixed as their prey.—At one moment it seemed to him as if the

church-yard of Cross-Meikle were the scene of his torments. He saw the tomb of his father, with filthy things crawling up and down upon the face of the marble; while he himself, lying prostrate upon the grave of his wife, heard the poisonous breath of fiends whistling in his ear above her dust. He saw his living friend; old Maxwell was there, with haughty, angry eyes. Little Sarah stood close by him, pale and motionless; farther off, the whole of his congregation were crowded together about the door of the church, and he heard scornful curses muttered. — These vanished, and he felt, with a sort of sense of relief in the midst of his despair, as if he were once more alone with the ill-favoured attendants to whom he knew himself to be abandoned. He gazed back again with sullen dead eyes upon their gleaming countenances of wrath and joy distorted and intermingled together. He frowned upon them, as if daring them to do their worst. They screamed aloud with harsh horrid voices — pounced upon him — lifted him up into the air, and then flung him down again, as if in sport, and he their plaything. He strove to utter the name of his Maker, but ere he could open his mouth, the holy name itself passed away from his recollection, and they stooped nearer and nearer to him, and peered into his eyes with looks of triumph, as if they had read his thoughts, and knew he was baffled from within — without their working.

In his agony, he shook the stone beneath him, and it heaved on its crumbling foundation. A spasm of natural terror made him spring to his feet, and he leaped backwards upon the heath. The big gray stone, its motion accelerated by the action of his leap, loosened itself the next moment, and tumbled headlong into the dreary waters over which it had toppled perhaps for centuries. Down it went with one heavy plunge; for the ear that followed it instinctively strove in vain to catch its meeting with the bottom of the tarn. Ring after ring circled and glistened wider and wider on the face of the black mere, and all was again black, motionless, silent as before.

Adam Blair devoured with his eyes the heavings of the water until they were no more, and then stretching forth his hand above his head, cried out, with a voice of piercing horror, "My God, my God, hast thou deserted me utterly! Why leaped I back from the trembling rock? Why is that saved once more, which is useless, worthless, miserable, lost, lost for ever! God, God, look down in compassion! — my misery is greater than I can bear!"

He was in the very act of springing — the next moment would have been his last, when he was seized firmly from behind, and the voice of Charlotte thrilled in his ears. — "Stop, rash man! what dost thou? Wilt thou slay thyself — Look back, faint heart! Look back on me! Art thou alone miserable?"

Blair turned round and met her wild eyes; — "Lost woman," said he, shaking himself from her grasp, "what dost thou? What brings thee here? Wilt thou not leave me to myself — to my misery? It is all thou hast left me."

"Adam Blair, what hast thou left to me?"

"To fly, woman, to repent — to weep, — perhaps, not to weep for ever. For thee there may be hope."

"For me! why not for thee!"

"Torment me no farther. I preached to others — myself am an outcast. Once more leave me. — Farewell."

"Adam Blair, your hand burns; your fingers burn like a coal."

"My heart — my heart burns," cried Adam, smiting his breast. A moment after, he covered his face with his hands, kneeled at Charlotte's feet, and wept audibly.

"Go, go, I beseech ye; yet forgive me before you go — say that you forgive me, Charlotte, before we part for ever!"

"*I* forgive? Is it for *me* to offer forgiveness? Oh, little do ye know my thoughts!" — and she knelt on the heath beside him, — and their tears mingled as they rolled down upon the ground.

“My God!” said Blair, “my God! bruise me no farther. — Oh Isabel, my Saint, my wounded Saint, my Isabel! Wife of my bosom! my only, my virgin love! look down in pity, if thy pure eyes behold me! Look down in pity, sweet Saint, upon frail, sinful dust and ashes! If angels weep, weep for me, my Isabel!”

Charlotte sprung up, and dashing the tears from her eyes, said, “Adam Blair, we part, and part for ever! — But I go not until you have promised — until you have sworn by the God who said, ‘Thou shalt not kill,’ that you will do yourself no harm. Selfish man! would you heap sorrow on sorrow, till the heart break beneath its burden, with all its guilty blood unpurified within it? Speak — promise — swear, while you are on your knees before me, — and remember that God is present to hear you — even here in this wilderness ——”

“I swear,” he said, casting his eyes upwards, but without looking on Charlotte, “I swear that I shall wait God’s time. God grant it be not long! God shield me from presumptuous sin!”

When he had uttered these words, he stooped his head downwards again, and remained for some moments with his eyes fixed upon the ground, — but without any motion either of sobbing or of weeping.

When he arose again, his face was filled, not with the turbulence of contending passions, but with a fixed and desperate calmness. “Charlotte,” said he, “we should part in sorrow, not in anger: Let each keep for solitude, what in solitude only is fitting. — Farewell, Charlotte, — once again, farewell, and for ever!”

Charlotte’s tears burst once more over her burning cheek, as she answered, “Farewell!” She extended her hand towards him, but instantly drew it back; and stood with her eyes fixed upon the water, while he, with quick and violent steps, walked away from her along the margin of the tarn, and then up the face of the heath, in the direction opposite to the path by which he had come thither from Uigness.

He had proceeded at a rapid though uneven pace for

a considerable way up the steep side of the hill, ere Charlotte withdrew her eyes from the water, and with a sudden start of emotion, gazed wildly after him over the gloomy space he had traversed. She saw him distinctly labouring up the ascent many hundred yards above, and followed him with her eyes, until his figure was shut from them by the projection of a crag, behind which his course lay. She still gazed for a moment, but he did not re-appear—and then at last she sat down among the heather, and clasping her hands together on her bosom, wept bitterly and silently. The sense of utter desertion, for the first time, mingled with the pangs of contrition; and her woman's breast panted beneath the burden of hopeless misery. "Alone, alone, quite alone," said she to herself, "alone as in the grave. No last look of love to dwell with me—alas! not one. I am pitied—ha! perhaps I am scorned,—perhaps I am hated.—Love! Oh, I was never loved. Even now,—it is but of Isabel Gray he thinks!—he prays to her spirit,—he wastes no thought on the living heart that is broken.—Oh! that it would break! Go, Adam Blair,—go, weep, and dry your tears, and mingle with man and woman, and find other comforters. Misery is with you now; but what is your misery to mine?—to my utter misery? O God! dark and inscrutable are thy ways; if indeed thou regardest us; if indeed it be true that the doings of earth are heeded from above—Is there indeed an above?—Is there indeed a God?—Are we more than clay—than dust?—Shall we indeed be more than dust hereafter? Alas! Oh God! all is blindness—blackness—utter blackness.—God have mercy upon me, a sinner! God have mercy on me! there is no other eye to pity.—Great God! look down upon me in compassion.—Jesus, Saviour, gentle Saviour, pity me—hear the cry of a bruised heart!"

A momentary pause took place among the troubled workings of her mind, and then her thoughts flowed in quite another course. She took up one stone after another, and hurled them from her into the pool, and

listened to the splashing sounds she was herself creating. Suddenly she stopped, and began to speak aloud amidst the silence of the desert place, with a voice of more energy than she had ever addressed to the ear of man. "Wretch," said she, "oh, wretch that I am! Is it for me to conceive reproachful thoughts? Is it for me to brood in bitterness over that which, but for me, could never have been? Is it for me—miserable—to complain of him that I have ruined—undone—undone perhaps for ever? Calm and pure was his spirit,—calm, even as these waters, till my hand stirred their depths. Would to God his calmness could be restored like theirs! Pure spirit!—blessed spirit—I came to comfort;—of what have I not robbed thee?—Isabel—sainted Isabel—thee too have I injured—thee too have I robbed. If sorrow can reach the abodes of the departed, I have sent sorrow to thee. Poor innocent orphan, I thought to love thee like a mother—What a mother! A fiend came to the dwelling of sorrow and innocence when I came to theirs. When shall that lowly roof hang again over untroubled heads? I have spoiled them of all, of every thing: and yet I reproached—yes, I reproached him with my eyes, and he turned from me as if I, not he, had been the victim. Wretch! He went from me—he has gone from me for ever, and I never knelt—his eyes never saw me kneel in the dust before him. I bandied words with him—I intruded on his anguish—I disturbed, I tormented him anew. I saved him, yes, I saved him—I saved his life—Yes, but I spoke to him as if it had been mine to speak and his to hear. O God! I cannot bear this thought. I will fly after him. I will fly rapidly after him, over hill and heath. I will find him.—I may yet find him in the wilderness. I will kneel to him ere he goes. I will rain tears upon his feet. I will bid him farewell, not with words, but tears: they fit me better."

CHAPTER XV.

FEEBLE indeed she was, but the stung mind lent its vigour to the sickly frame as she followed the path which Blair had taken up the steep and shaggy precipice before her. She never relaxed her speed, except now and then for a moment, and then she resumed her way with additional impetuosity. The strong wiry fibres of the untrodden heath tore her ankles until the blood burst through her stockings — but she never heeded the smart.

At length she gained the brow of the hill, and cast her eyes round her to consider in which direction he had most probably taken his course. Her eyes wandered wide over a sea of mountains, divided every where by deep and rocky glens, down which, in every direction, the Alpine streams were flowing — but no where, though she strained her vision to the utmost, could she descry any human dwelling, far less any human form. “I shall never see him,” said she to herself, “I shall never see him more — he is lost to me for ever — I shall never find him among this labyrinth of mountains.” And so saying, she plunged more rapidly than ever down the shelving bank, and ran on in that sort of blind agony until her course was arrested by a brook, which had been swollen into a torrent by the storm of the preceding night.

She followed its course, having no power to cross its waters; nor, if she had been able to do so, any predilection for one path more than for another. It soon conducted her into a black pass, through which the tumbling waters forced themselves, leaving barely room for any human foot to partake the passage they had opened for themselves in the winters of ages. Just there, however, Charlotte descried the mark of a man’s foot as if recently stamped on the wet sand, and she knew it was Blair’s, and went on, with new strung nerves, although it was

sometimes necessary for her to leap from one wet stone to another, on footing as uncertain as might have arrested a hunter in the full career of the chase.

The dark pass opened upon a little hitherto-unseen glen, down the purple waste of which a green line winding from side to side, and here and there a solitary birch tree, marked the progress of the streamlet. At the further extremity, perhaps a quarter of a mile off, her eye discovered a little desolate shieling perched on an elevation of rock over the margin of the brook. A pile of dried turf stood immediately beyond, and was only to be distinguished from the human dwelling by the want of the heavy wreath of smoke, which was seen issuing from the centre of the roof beside it. A bare pine tree, with a few ragged branches, leaned over the shieling ; and a little patch of broader verdure on the other side of the brook, betokened the scanty agriculture of the Highland shepherd who tenanted that remote abode.

The shadows were, by this time, beginning to fall eastward, and it immediately occurred to Charlotte, that, in all probability, Mr Blair would not think of going beyond this place until the return of day-light ; or at least that, if he had passed onwards, the people of the cottage would be able to give her some information of the direction in which he had bent his steps. The shieling, therefore, was her mark, and she continued to move towards it by the side of the stream ; but insensibly, as she drew nearer to it, her pace was slackened, and she lost that spring of excitement which had hitherto carried her bounding over bog, rock, and heath. Slowly, and with lingering steps, she went over this last part of her way, and she paused entirely, and sat down by the side of the brook, when she had reached a point from which her eyes could see, with distinctness, the low door of the shieling — its solitary milk-cow grazing on the small space of grass in front of it — and an old bearded goat reclining on the turf of which its roof was composed, and nibbling the few ears of barley that had found room to grow there among the layers of heath.

She kept her eyes fixed upon these poor symptoms of human habitation, endeavouring in vain to summon up courage enough to carry her into their presence. At last, however, an old woman came out to carry in fuel, and, as she was about to stoop and re-enter the house, it happened that she threw her eyes up the glen. It may easily be supposed that she started on seeing a lady clad in white, sitting by herself close to the margin of the water.

The old woman paused for a moment at her door, flung down her bundle of turf, and began to walk as nimbly as her age permitted, towards the place where Mrs Campbell was sitting. Charlotte, in the meantime, perceiving her approach, rose from the stone on which she had been sitting, and advanced, though still with slow steps, to meet her.

The shepherd's wife at once recognized the Lady of Uigness, although she had not seen her for many years, nor heard any thing of her return to that part of the country : but although the courtesy of her salutation needed no aid of language to make itself understood, as Charlotte knew no more than a very few words of the Gaelic, their communication was at an end almost before it could be said to have begun. The old woman, however, found means to make Charlotte comprehend distinctly that there was something wrong in the shieling, and that the lady would confer a favour by immediately entering it along with her. The anxious pointing of her finger, and grasping of her garments, told the tale plainly enough, and Charlotte, not without some suspicion that Mr Blair was already there before her, summoned up all her lost energies, and readily accompanied the motions of her guide.

She followed her over a rude bridge, constructed from two half-mouldering pine trunks, and was very soon at the door of the hut, from which, as well as from every crevice in the frail walls, wreaths of smoke came forth, eddy upon eddy, and curl upon curl. She stooped after her and entered ; but, for a moment, the dark atmos-

phere, and the pungency of the turf-smoke, rendered her eyes quite incapable of discovering any object in the interior.

She rubbed her smarting eyes and saw Blair lying prostrate on the floor, with a plaid wrapped over part of his figure, close to the fire, which blazed under its canopy of smoke in the centre of the place. One of his arms lay stiffly by his side; the other hand covered his eyes and forehead; he seemed to be in a state of stupor, but every now and then all his limbs quivered and shook beneath the folds of the garment which enveloped them. Charlotte stood in silence by the old woman, who kept pointing towards him with her finger, and whispering all the while into her ear discordant and unintelligible sounds of alarm and fear. After a pause of some minutes, during which nothing indicated that Mr Blair was aware of any one being near him, she at last spoke these words in a whisper, "Adam — Adam Blair, you are sick, you are ill. Do not shrink from me; alas! you need not; look up, and speak to me, and tell me what you feel."

Mr Blair uncovered his eyes, looked wildly through the smoke, and, uttering a deep hollow groan, turned himself with his face towards the earth on the floor of the shieling.

Charlotte stood for some space in the same attitude in which she heard his groan, and then perceiving that his silence was either obstinate or involuntary, she drew near to him, knelt down beside him, and seized one of his hands in hers. The moment he felt her touch, the sick man started to his feet, and leaped backwards from the place where she was kneeling.

"Off, off — torment me not — woman, torment me not! — Wilt thou never leave me? Shall the curse cling to me for ever?"

He said these words in a tone of voice, low, indeed, and feeble, but nevertheless quite distinct and fervid, and then made an effort as if he would have escaped towards the door; but the exertion was beyond his strength; he reeled, he staggered, and sunk once more

to the ground, on which he would have fallen with all his weight, had not Charlotte been there to receive him in her arms, and support him gently into the plaid upon which he had before been stretched. She wrapped its folds once more over him, and he seemed to coil himself up in a knot below them, while a spasm of more convulsive shivering agitated the whole of his body. He stretched forth his hand at the moment when all his limbs were shaking with violence, drew one of the corners of the mantle right over his face; and in a moment lay at her feet as motionless as a log.

Charlotte watched him for a few minutes in silence; and then flinging herself on her knees again beside him, uncovered his face, and gazed upon his closed eyes and pale features. She took his hand, now unresisting, lifted it up, and pressed it to her lips, and when she quitted her hold of it, saw it drop down as heavily as if it had been part of a dead man. With that she sprung up, and seizing a wooden vessel which lay near, ran out swiftly from the shieling. She returned, and kneeling down again, began to lave water on his face. He opened his eyes heavily on feeling the coolness; but instantly the lids relapsed, and not one word or motion farther attested his sense of her presence.

She was still in the same posture, when, after the lapse of half an hour, the old herdsman entered the hut along with one of his sons who had been out with him all day on the mountain. Charlotte recovered herself the moment they entered, and addressed them with an earnest interrogation, whether it were not possible to make a sort of litter, and carry Mr Blair as far as Uigness. The young man, as it happened, understood a little English, and as soon as he had comprehended the purport of her speech, he said something in Gaelic to his father, and they both quitted the place immediately, making signs that they would be back again ere long.

They had not been long away, when Mr Blair shook the plaid from above him, and sat up supporting himself on his hands. He regarded first the old woman, and

then Charlotte, with his dull eyes, and said to the latter, in a low and broken whisper, "Charlotte, I have used you ill—even now I have used you unlike a man. Forgive me, Charlotte, I feel that my mortal offences will soon be over—I feel that within which cannot deceive me. I am sick, I am sick to death. Farewell! for God's sake leave me. I shall die here; I shall be buried here in this wild place. Let no one know where I have been buried."

Her tears flowed abundantly as she listened to these calmly spoken words; but a moment afterwards his cheek began to glow again, and his eye to flash, and another ague-like shivering passed over his whole frame, and he sunk prostrate once more on the ground, apparently as helpless as before.

It was just then that the young man re-entered the shieling, and invited Mrs Campbell to come and look at the litter they had formed. It consisted of three or four pieces of timber wattled together with withes plucked from the low green willows, which here and there grew among the rushes by the side of their brook. A layer of heath was arranged over this rude frame; and Charlotte having seen her own shawl and the men's plaids added, desired them both to come in and lift her friend.

They obeyed her, and Blair seemed to be quite unconscious of what had happened, until they had borne him out into the open air. He then opened his eyes again, and looked about him for a moment, but still without appearing to take the least notice either of the men or of Charlotte. They laid him at length on the litter,—wrapped the plaid over him, and began to bear him like a child along the path which both he and Charlotte had already traversed. He lay as they walked, with closed eyes, and Charlotte began to hope that the motion had perhaps lulled him into a slumber, that might in the end prove salutary and refreshing.

These mountaineers, burdened as they were, moved on so nimbly over their native heaths, that Charlotte had some little difficulty in being able to keep up with them.

They were too well acquainted with those glens, however, to follow throughout the same track by which she had penetrated into their retreat. A shorter cut over the hill brought them, in not much more than an hour, to a summit from which the expanse of Lochfine could be descried; and, in half as much more time, Charlotte could see the old tower of Uigness breaking the outline between and the bright waters. When they had reached the lower eminence immediately above the house, she hastened her steps, passed the bearers, and had gained the door of the tower before they had finished the descent.

Mr Blair never opened his eyes until the litter on which he had been conveyed was let down on the floor of the chamber which Charlotte had already prepared for his reception. It was then that he started up from his prostrate posture, and gazing wildly around him, seemed to be waking as from a dream. Charlotte motioned to the men, and they began to undress him; but, although he kept his eyes open while they were obeying her directions, he appeared to have as yet no knowledge either of where he was, or of what they were doing with him. In silence, he suffered himself to be stript, nor did he offer any sort of resistance when they lifted up and bore him towards the bed which had been made ready to receive him. A moment after, he sat upright in the couch, and fixing his eyes on the window, which was wide open to the air, seemed to be agitated all over with some new and sudden shudder of bodily anguish. He leaped from the bed with the activity of a man in full health and strength, escaping, or striving to escape, from a mortal foe — rushed towards the window — leaned over it naked as he was, uttered one deep groan, and sunk backward upon the floor of the chamber.

He was quickly lifted up again, and borne back towards his bed, but when his hand touched the sheets he wrestled so violently, that the men were compelled to lay him down upon the ground. “Not *there*!” he cried with a voice of thunder — “not *there* — no, no — not *there*!

Spare me that last agony, ye avengers of guilt! — spare me, spare me, lay me any where but *there*!”

With these words he had exhausted his energy, and he lay once more feeble and helpless as an infant before them. But Charlotte dashed away the tears that had sprung into her eyes, and motioning with her hand to the bearers, led the way into an upper chamber, where another bed was hastily prepared. He tossed from side to side fiercely, stared round and round him with glazed, hot, burning eye-balls, but neither spoke a word after he had been laid there, nor made the least effort to lift his head from off the pillow.

The moment Mrs Campbell felt satisfied that he was too much weakened to attempt any farther violence, she despatched the younger herdsman to Inverary, having desired the father on no account to quit the tower. She made every one leave the room, and closing the windows against the bright moonlight, she took her place in silence, and in darkness, beside the couch of Blair.

CHAPTER XVI.

It was about noon, on the seventh day from that in which these things happened, that Adam Blair opened his eyes after being buried for fifteen hours in a deep sleep, and, gazing about the chamber in which he was lying, began to make his first faint endeavour towards consciousness. He was so feeble that he could not lift his head from the pillow without being oppressed with a dizziness, under which he was immediately compelled to submit, and it was not until after many efforts, that he so far recovered himself as to be sensible that he was lying alone in a half-darkened room, and that many days must have passed over his head since any distinct image of any kind had been retained by his memory.

A dim, confused, languid, dream of interminable duration, seemed to have been hanging over his faculties, and

even now he could scarcely satisfy himself that its oppression had passed away. During that long dreary night what sufferings had he not undergone? Whither had his spirit wandered? Whence had it returned? Pain had been with him; burning pain had racked every thew and sinew of his frame. Chill icy pangs had been with him also; even yet his limbs were stiffened with the sense of cold, creeping anguish. But over all alike what a cloud of blackness, utter impenetrable blackness, had been wrapped and folded! Troubled visions had passed before him, glaring through the enveloping darkness — strange unearthly sights, mixed up with human faces he knew not of whom — strange hollow whispers, hands grasping him, and blindness, and helplessness, and dumbness, and deadness, suspended all the while like weights upon his bosom. His feeble brain reeled under the exertion his faculties were making to retrace something of what had been during this blank interval, and he closed his eyes because the lids felt so heavy that it was a pain for him to keep them open. Body and mind had been alike shaken, alike unstrung, by the fever through which he had passed; and he lay in a state of total languor, as if expecting some new assault of a mighty foe whom he had no longer either the power or the hope, or even the desire of resisting.

Suddenly, there came to his ear the echo of mournful music; and although it seemed to him at the first moment, as if it were produced quite close to him, he became sensible, after listening for a few moments, that the notes came from some considerable distance.

It was a wild, plaintive strain, played, as he fancied, on a single pipe — and he could not help imagining, that the same sounds had been heard by him more than once during the long trance from which he had just been roused. Never was such a deep melancholy clothed in sweet sounds; never was melody so fit for feeble dying ears. The breath of it seemed as if it were wafted from some world of unearthly repose, some sphere of pensive majesty — above joy, too calm for sorrow. The tears

flowed softly, slowly, healingly, over the sick man's cheek as he listened to those sounds, which seemed to be every moment receding farther, and dropping fainter from the wings of the light breeze that bore them.

The music stopt as suddenly as it had commenced, and Mr Blair felt as if all his illness were returning with its cessation. He, after one or two vain attempts, at last succeeded in quitting his bed, and finding that he could by no means support himself on his feet, he crawled like an infant towards the window. With much difficulty he opened a little piece more of the shutters, but shrunk back from the increase of light, as a strong man does from a torch held close to his eyes.

By degrees, however, he could not only endure the light, but, as if moved by some strong instinctive thirst for the fresh air, he opened the casement also, and admitted the healthful breeze to play upon his worn and wasted frame. The balmy breath of Nature did not come to him in vain : it calmed his fluttering pulses, soothed every racked and wearied nerve, and sent renovated life into every exhausted vein. Nevertheless, the exertion he had made, had, for the moment, overtaken his forces, and I believe he would have sunk to the floor in a faint, when a new impulse was lent to his efforts by the recommencement of the same melancholy music, which had already enticed him from his bed of sickness.

He leaned his elbow on the stone frame-work of the window, and bent his eyes in the direction from which, as it appeared to him, the music proceeded ; but he saw nothing except a single boat rowing away outwards into the Loch. A moment after, two other boats followed from behind a projection of the shore, not far from the place where he himself stood ; and when he perceived that they were all moving together, he was satisfied it was in one or other of them that the musician was playing.

Slowly he followed with his heavy gaze the retreating course of the three boats, but he was altogether unable to distinguish any thing either of the number of persons

in them, or of their quality. At last he saw them glide one after the other close upon the little islet of Inchree, which lies nearly half way between Uigness and the opposite coast of Lochfine. He observed, that none of them emerged again upon the water beyond the wooded island, and concluded that their object had been to fish under the shelter of its rocks. A moment after, however, it flashed upon his mind that he had once heard some dark and mournful story, the scene of which was laid in that desolate land. Who had told him that story?—Strange to say, it was so that the first idea of CHARLOTTE was that day excited within his mind; but, oh! with that idea what thousand thoughts of grief, shame, terror, misery, floated into his bosom, like the black lashing waves of some returning and irresistible sea!

In an instant, the whole mystery of his malady lay clear before him; he remembered every thing that had happened on the day after that night of darkness as if it had occurred but a few hours before; he remembered the image of the distant glen, and the black shieling, and Charlotte there bending over him unexpectedly, and the bier on which he was carried, and the motion of the bier, and the faces of the men that conveyed him. He remembered his being carried into the house;—his spasm of horror when he felt himself on that bed, seemed as if it had scarcely left his bosom. Then he remembered something more confusedly, of drink being administered to him by Charlotte, and of his dashing the cup from her hand, and lying before her, burning with thirst, cursing her with his eyes. Then it seemed as if she had kissed him where he lay motionless with cold lips, which glowed at the touch—and then, all at once, she vanished, and there was nothing behind except one mingled mass of dream and delirium—dull dreary images, all huddled together, alike obscure, alike painful. Where was Charlotte now?—What had become of her?—Why had she deserted him?—Had he driven her from him in anger?—Had he in madness insulted her?—Had she fled from him in wrath?—All these thoughts, and

hundreds more, flashed in rapid succession over his mind ; and the weary body, yielding at last to the unequal conflict, sank altogether helpless, and almost as insensible as helpless, upon the floor.

He was lifted from it again after the lapse of a few moments, and once more recovering himself, he found that he was in the arms of an old woman, and of a young man clad in black, and having something the appearance of a gentleman.

He said nothing until they had laid him on his couch, and folded the bed-clothes over him ; and then he asked feebly for something to drink. The old woman reached a glass to him ; he drank and closed his eyes.

CHAPTER XVII.

EXHAUSTED nature asserted her privilege, and once more Mr Blair's senses were steeped for a long succession of hours in the profoundest forgetfulness. The clamour of turbulent voices, with which the chambers below him resounded, during a great part of the evening of that day, had no power to rouse him from this deep and motionless slumber ; and when he at length awoke again about the rising of the moon, every thing about him was silent, his brain felt cool and composed, and he fixed his eyes steadfastly upon a human figure kneeling alone at the foot of the bed on which he was lying. The feeble twilight was not enough to shew him any thing more than the general outline, and he continued gazing on it, for some time, without betraying, either by word or gesture, that sleep had deserted his eyelids.

At last he said, " Friend, who are you ? — who is here with me ? " in a whisper ; and the moment he had said so, the kneeling man arose slowly, and bending over him, and taking hold of his hand, made answer also in a whisper, " It is I — it is John Maxwell — Heaven be praised that you see me ! "

Mr Blair drew his hand from between the old man's clasping fingers, and pulled the sheet over his face, and replied, groaning deeply, "John Maxwell, John Maxwell, you know not what you do, you know not whom you bend over, you know not for whom you have prayed!"

"Dear sir, dear Mr Adam," replied the old man, "I pray you be composed; look at me, and you will know me well;—I am John Maxwell, and you are Adam Blair, my friend, my minister—you have had a sweet sleep, and all will yet be well again."

"Oh, never!" the sick man groaned from underneath his bed-clothes, "Never—never—never more! Leave me, old man, leave a sinner, an outcast, a wretch abandoned of the Almighty. I pray you, leave me to myself!—Against you also have I sinned."

"Sir, dear sir, you wander; your mind is not yet restored; your dreams and visions yet hang about you. I pray you let me feel your hand—it is burning hot again, and yet now it is cool.—I pray you shake these terrible fancies from you, and know yourself and me. We are here, we are both at Uigness; but all is well at home, and you will be strong again, and we shall soon return together to Cross-Meikle."

"Home!—Home!—Cross-Meikle! return together to Cross-Meikle!—My God, spare me!"

"The Lord's will be done, Mr Adam; you must not forget that blessed text: 'The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away.' This is not the first awful bereavement you have undergone. Hitherto, the Lord hath holpen you; yet, again, you shall be strengthened with strength that is from above."

He paused for a moment ere he made answer. "Bereavement!—of what speak ye?—Surely, my spirit wanders indeed. Of what thing is it that you speak to me?"

"Oh! sir," said John, "if you knew it not before, I have done much amiss."

"Speak out,—let me hear—have you brought me evil tidings of my child? I charge you, speak out. I

am prepared for all things!—what blow can be too great?”

“God be praised, the bairn was well two days ago, and I trust is so now. It was not of her that I spake.”

“Of whom spake you?”

“Oh! sir, you terrify me with your groans. Listen to me more composedly, else I cannot speak.—I spake of her whom we have this day buried.—I spake of Mrs Campbell.”

At that word Mr Blair threw the bed-clothes from off his countenance, and sitting upright, gazed steadfastly upon the old man's face, on which, by this time, the moonlight was streaming clearly, “What say you of burial?—of death?—Let me hear you speak.—I pray you, let me hear it all.”

“Ah! now, sir, this is like yourself; it is so we should hear of what it has pleased God to do. But surely they told you before how the fever had wrought with her. Surely, they said to me that you had seen the boats as they were rowing off for Inchree.”

The remembrance of the solemn music, and the three boats, floated over Mr Blair's mind when he heard this. He remained in silence for a few moments, and then flung himself back upon his pillow, and weeping aloud, cried, “O God! O God! not one hour for repentance! not one hour for tears!——O God!” (His voice sunk into a trembling whisper.) “O God! why sparest thou the blacker sinner?—why lie I here to be told of this?—I remember it all, I remember it all clearly now. I remember her watching over me, I remember my spurning her away!—Yes, yes, I see it clearly; from me, from me she caught this malady!—Great God, in darkness thou workest! Terrible Maker, all is night around thee.”

With these words of anguish, Mr Blair once more covered his face, and for a space of many minutes, John Maxwell could not prevail upon him to make answer to any thing he said. The old man stood all the while leaning over his couch in a stato of painful suspense, but,

after a time, he desisted from addressing him. He had been silent, therefore, for a little space, when Blair suddenly started up again, and said in a tone, the composure of which, following as it did, so many broken and groaning ejaculations, thrilled him even more than any voice of violent emotion could have done, — “John Maxwell, I am faint at heart, I would fain have food. Get me something speedily that I may eat and drink. My fever has left me, and deep weakness is all that remains.”

“Thank God,” said John, “thank God for that word I have heard! Be calm, dear sir, and I shall return to you immediately.”

So saying, the old man left him, and after a few minutes, came back with a salver of bread and honeycomb, and a large basin of milk. Mr Blair turned away his face, while the old man pronounced a blessing upon what he had brought, and then recovering all his composure of look and gesture, began to swallow eagerly whatever was prepared for him. “So,” said he, after he had eat and drunk abundantly, “even so. The frail body will soon be able to sustain the needful pains that are before me. Once more, good old man, I thank you — I thank you — unworthy though I be of your kindness, God will not disdain it.” And he added, after a pause, “John Maxwell, come to me early in the morning; but leave me now, for I feel that I shall sleep once more, and when that is over, I shall be better able for that which must be said and done.”

The old man smoothed his pillow, saw him stretched in the attitude of perfect repose, and then obeyed him by quitting the chamber. He went no farther than the door, however: having taken his seat immediately behind it, he lighted his taper, and prepared him to watch there, lest his Minister should have any occasion for his services during the night.

Blair, meanwhile, strong in resolve, even in the midst of misery and weakness, conquered the thousand thoughts that would have banished repose, and slept on, perhaps, with such deep and deathlike slumbers as visit the eye-

lids of hopeless men, who know that, sleep they or wake they, death awaits them on the morrow. Nor was it any thing wonderful that the wearied old man slept soundly too, although he had resolved upon watching. He had been for two days a traveller, and had not enjoyed any thing more than hasty and broken slumbers ever since he set out from Cross-Meikle in quest of his Minister.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MR STRAHAN, repelled in the ruffian insults with which he had ventured to harass Mrs Campbell, quitted Uigness, it may be supposed, on his return to the Low Country, in no very enviable state of feeling. He was riding rapidly, like a man capable of any thing but repose, — (for the shame of detection was to him in the place of the shame of guilt, and scorn of what he conceived to be an injury done to himself, was blended with many uneasy anticipations of what he might have to suffer from the merited anger and scorn of the employer, whose trust he had so foully betrayed,) — when his notice was attracted by a boat moving, as it seemed, towards the tower he had just abandoned: And when he recognized the form of Mr Blair, it was with a fiendish, and, at the same time, a cowardly joy, that he did so; for it immediately flashed upon him that the clergyman had followed Mrs Campbell thither by her invitation, and under the intoxicating influence of a guilty passion; and secure in the sense of having at least ascertained, (for so he thought he had now done,) the justice of his own and Campbell's original suspicions, he, from that moment, discarded the troublesome meditations which more directly regarded himself, and continued his journey in a mood almost as triumphant as malignant.

His surprise was great, when, on reaching the inn at which he generally stayed when in Glasgow, he heard

himself suddenly called to from a window looking out upon the court-yard, in a voice which could belong to no one but Campbell of Uigness himself. It was not without a considerable struggle, though brief in duration, that he contrived to smooth his brow sufficiently for entering the room in which the Captain was waiting for him ; but he was relieved once more from his trepidations, when Campbell, receiving him with all his usual cordiality, said simply, "Strahan, I was astonished at not hearing from you ; and besides, I thought this was a piece of business I had done wrong in devolving upon you or any man, when I was in a condition to execute it myself. So, I e'en put my foot in a vessel that was a-sailing for Leith, and here I am, so far on my way in quest of this unhappy woman. Not finding you in Edinburgh, and hearing that you had gone westwards, I took it for granted you had set off for Uigness. Is it not so? — speak — tell me all that has happened — tell me all you know ; I am prepared for every thing. You can at least have nothing to tell that will *surprise* me."

Mr Strahan replied by a brief summary of all that he himself had done. When he came to the end of the story, however, he found himself a little at a loss to account for his having suffered Mr Blair to approach the house of Uigness, without having taken care to provide proper evidence of the fact of his coming thither, and remaining there, alone with Mrs Campbell, under such circumstances of suspicion. He stammered for a moment, when this idea crossed his mind, and then concluded his speech, with saying very boldly, "I thought it was of no use, sir, to go about the matter, when it had come this length, in any but the most deliberate and accurate manner. So I took boat, and came thus far, that I might procure the assistance of two or three people of respectability, personally acquainted with this Blair, with whom it was my intention to return to Uigness to-morrow, and so put an end to the whole affair at once."

"Right, right, quite right," muttered Campbell, with a sullen and dogged sneer ; "but I believe there is no

great need for all this now,— I know Charlotte better than you do. I shall go and see them myself,— and trust me there will be no need for any more witnesses. But, to-morrow, as you say, will be time enough ; i'faith, there is no fear of their parting so soon after they have taken so much trouble to meet. This is Sunday, is it not ? damme, you may swear he'll take the week out at Uigness ere he thinks of coming back to his psalm-singing. I have just ordered some dinner, —, we'll join our messes, and make a night on't ; and now I think on't, I have not tasted your right rum-punch for these five years. Geneva ! by Jove, you can get any other schnaps where you please, but I never tasted rum that was worth the name, except either over the herring-pond, or here in this pretty town. What signifies being in the dumps, Strahan ; — and about a woman ? Oh fie ! a false jade of a woman — Why, what says the old song ? — I'll sing it : — by Jove, I'll sing it, below their window.

‘ Tell Zeal, it wants devotion,
Tell Love, it is but lust,
Tell time, it is but motion,
Tell Flesh, it is but dust,
And wish them not reply,
For thou must give the lie.’

Pooh ! pooh ! Master Duncan Strahan, my very good friend, you shall give me the grace-cup of salt and water, if you see me flinch once for all that's come and gone.”

Duncan Strahan drew his chair, and caroused till cock-crow with the valiant Captain ; as it is like enough many brothers of his trade had done before, and have done since — with clients, who would have broken their heads had they known all the services they had received at the hands of these smooth-faced bottle companions. A few short hours of feverish slumber were sufficient to make Captain Campbell himself again, and after breakfast they parted, Mr Strahan proceeding in his own course to Edinburgh, and Uigness committing himself to

the fortunes of a Lochfine boat, which he had discovered at the Broomielaw.

Mr Strahan, in his way eastward, halted for a few hours at the house of a gentleman who resided in the parish immediately adjoining to Cross-Meikle, and took occasion, with infinite dexterity, as he thought, to insinuate all his own notions concerning Mr Blair's conduct, and the motives of his absence from his own residence. Dr Muir, the minister of the parish where this took place, happened to call in the course of the morning, and received the scandal from the lady of the mansion at which Strahan had dropt it. He, with great indignation, took up Blair's defence; but having, as he thought, effectually undone the evil in that quarter, he could not help riding over to Cross-Meikle, ere he returned to his own house, for the purpose of making some farther inquiries, either among the Semplehaugh family, or the domestics at the Manse. In the course of his ride, he fell in with the elder, John Maxwell, whose friendship for Mr Blair, as well as his influence in the parish, were both so well known, that the Doctor did not hesitate to enter into some conversation with him upon the subject that occupied his reflections. The result of this conversation, whatever it might be, was, that next morning, honest Maxwell took his staff in his hand, and commenced the longest journey he had undertaken for more than a score of summers — to Lochfine side.

He did not reach the place of his destination, however, until long after Captain Campbell, who had at command much greater personal vigour, to say nothing of other appliances to boot, had once more gained the shore of his native loch.

As he sailed up the strait, on the evening of the second day after his parting from Strahan at Glasgow, and saw, at last, before him, the tower of Uigness, — Campbell, who had hitherto performed his journey in a mood of sulkiness, almost of indifference, felt his bosom kindled with a savage and yearning rage. He leaped on shore the moment his boatmen halted on their oars, and with-

out saying a single word to any one of the crew, rushed swiftly up the rocky path. His hand was on the hilt of his sword when he stepped over his threshold, and entered his long deserted hall:—and his face glowed with the stern scarlet of revenge.

He had not time to penetrate into the inner part of the house ere his motions were arrested by the young gentleman who has already been mentioned. Seeing that his dress was black, he never doubted that he was in the presence of Blair, and the first words he uttered were, “Kneel, rascal! kneel, holy rascal! and say your last prayers, and let them be the sincerest you ever said, as well as the shortest!”

The young man started backwards from the furious man, and answered calmly, “My name is Campbell; I am a surgeon at Inverary; I have come hither because I was sent for: I have done what I could, although I came too late; what is it that you or any man has to say to me?”

Captain Campbell put up his weapon in great confusion, and having craved pardon for his violence, passed into the extreme of cool civility. The surgeon, on his part, lost no time in informing him that he had been sent for to see a strange gentleman, who had been taken violently ill at a cottage in a neighbouring glen, and conveyed to Uigness by the attention of Mrs Campbell—that he had come, accordingly, two days before—that the gentleman, after great sufferings, had at last begun to give hopes of overcoming the disorder; but that Mrs Campbell had caught the infection, and already yielded under the violence of the fever. “God knows,” added the surgeon, “what is now to be done. There is no one here but a single old woman, and a couple of ignorant herdsmen, and I know not who is the person that ought to be sent for in the absence of Uigness.”

“I am the man,” answered Campbell in a low and broken voice—“I am James Campbell of Uigness.—My wife is dead?”

The young man bowed in great confusion, being quite

shocked with the thought of having communicated his fatal intelligence in a manner so abrupt.

Campbell stood before him for some time with his eyes fixed steadfastly on the ground, and then motioned to him to lead the way up stairs. The young man made an effort to restrain him, but perceiving that this was in vain, he obeyed, and threw open the door of the chamber, wherein the remains of Charlotte had already been stretched forth in her winding-sheet. — Campbell signed for the surgeon to leave him the moment he entered the room.

He passed an hour there by himself, for aught that was known, in total silence ; and came out with no trace of tears on his cheeks, but with an air of melancholy and depression, such as would have not a little surprised any one acquainted with his character. He conversed calmly with the surgeon ; desired him to do all he could for Mr Blair ; gave directions about his wife's interment, for which he fixed the proper day and hour ; and then took leave, saying, that he must needs go and warn some of his relatives in person, but that he should take care to be back at Uigness on the morning of the day when the funeral was to take place.

When he returned he found John Maxwell in attendance upon the sick man along with the surgeon, and having heard who he was, and what was his errand, he received him with much courtesy. He made John sit in the boat with him as he went over to Inchree, where the ancient burial vault of his family was situated ; and, in like manner, when, after Charlotte had been laid in the dust, he rowed back again from that desolate island to Uigness. His company, according to the custom of the Highlands on such occasions, sat long and drank deep, but he had not failed more than once to make inquiries after the condition of Mr Blair in the course of the evening. On the whole, as John himself had as yet entertained no belief in his Minister's guilt, so he had as yet found no reason to suppose that Captain Campbell had the least suspicion of the sort with which his mind was

in reality filled ; and the good old man slept that night beside the door of the sick man's chamber—alas! with more serenity than he was destined to know for many a long night thereafter.

CHAPTER XIX.

LONG before Mr Blair awoke next morning, Captain Campbell had again quitted the house of Uigness, nor did he again return thither until nearly two days had elapsed.

The truth is, that no man's mind ever underwent a more sudden and remarkable change than his had done, in consequence of the events which have already been narrated. He had originally married Charlotte merely because he admired her beautiful person, and pitied her for the hard treatment she had received at the hands of young Arden ; but after the lapse of a short time, the facility with which she had hearkened to his own addresses, came to be thought of by him in a manner of which there have been, and, it is to be feared, at all times will be, but too many examples among our ungenerous sex, and the very circumstances which had, at first, afforded gratification to his vanity, furnished, in the sequel, food to that suspicious and jealous temper by which his character, like that of very many vain men, was distinguished. In short, ere they had lived together for many months in their Highland solitude, they had mutually become very sensible to their unfitness for each other : but it must be admitted, that while Charlotte controlled her high spirit, and strove to the utmost to appear an affectionate wife, Mr Campbell had either less pride or less art, and very soon gave up any attempt to conceal his real sentiments. When they left Scotland, and mingled again in the world, Charlotte's naturally lively disposition led her to make up to herself, by a large participation in all the pleasures of social life, for

the long restraint and solitude of her residence with her husband at Uigness ; while he, bringing with him into the open scenes of life all that suspiciousness which had been too well nursed in his retirement, watched every ebullition of her thoughtless glee and vivacity with an eye of predetermined evil, and caused her to chequer her hours of gaiety by many bitter tears shed in moments of secrecy. Their mutual dislike was at last brought to a point, which rendered it next to impossible for them to remain any longer together, by some circumstances trivial enough in themselves, and with the relation of which I shall not therefore fatigue the reader's patience. Charlotte left Holland, and came to Scotland by herself. The first news Campbell received of her was through the channel of Mr Strahan ; and we have already had abundance of leisure to observe what consequences were produced from the malicious view he had given of Charlotte's residence under Mr Blair's roof at Cross-Meikle.

But when Captain Campbell received the sudden intelligence of his wife's death — and the moment after, contemplated with his own eyes the cold remains of the beauty he had once worshipped — a crowd of thoughts which he had for years banished, and which had never been so utterly alien to his mind as they were but a few seconds before, rushed into a bosom not by nature devoid of generous feelings, nor incapable of reflection, and overcame and vanquished all the fiery passions with which his soul had been so deeply and so recently filled and agitated. In a single moment, the image of all his own early conduct to this unfortunate woman rose clearly on his memory ; the harsh, and causeless, and visible transition from love to aversion, by which he had chilled and checked all her young affections, was, for the first time, remembered with a self-reproaching acuteness ; and Campbell, bending over the lovely corse, smote his bosom, and accused himself of having been the true cause of all. The feelings of shame and sorrow which mingled in his breast left little room for anger, and this very moment, when, for the first time, he was certain of having been

injured, was also that in which he, for the first time, felt himself to be capable of forgiving an injury.

I have spoken of Campbell as *certain* that he had been dishonoured ; and he was not the less so because he had no positive legal proof in his possession. That deficiency, he, under any circumstances, would have despised ; now it scarcely ever occurred to him. — Doubt he had none ; he would have scorned himself had one shadow of it crossed his fancy. His mind was, as to this matter, as fixed and settled as it could have been, had he *really* seen all that had really happened. — Indeed, had this been otherwise, it is very possible he might have gazed with a harder eye on Charlotte's remains.

The favourable accounts he had formerly heard of Mr Blair's character, even from Mr Strahan himself, recurred to him, softened as he was ; and when he had conversed with John Maxwell, and so ascertained to what a depth of veneration the regard of Mr Blair's parishioners for their Minister in reality amounted, we must do Mr Campbell the justice to say, that he began to contemplate even the guilt by which his own honour had been wounded, with emotions rather of sorrow than of wrath. Aware as he was that a blot which the world would have thought comparatively little about in any other man, could not be discovered in the character of a minister of the Church of Scotland, without bringing along with it utter ruin, both of reputation and of fortune, and having no longer any personal advantage to expect from proving the guilt of his wife, but rather good reason to wish that all her faults should be buried in oblivion, Mr Campbell's feelings were entirely adverse to any public exposure of Mr Blair. He was a hot, a violent, a vain, and in many respects a rude man, but we must give him credit for both feeling and acting on this occasion, in a style of which a great many more polished characters might have been altogether incapable under similar circumstances. He determined to have some private conversation with Mr Blair, as soon as he should be so far recovered as to be able to listen to him without bodily harm, and then

having delivered him from those fears, with which he, hastily to be sure, but not unnaturally, supposed he must be labouring, to dismiss him from Uigness in safety. And as soon as he should have done this, it was his intention once more to quit Scotland, and rejoin his regiment abroad.

Mr Blair, on the other hand, was well aware that Uigness could have no proof; nay, more, the unhappy man had been led to conceive, from the report John Maxwell made of Captain Campbell's behaviour, that his suspicions had either been originally less violent than Mr Strahan had represented them, or that he had dismissed them from his bosom, in consequence of some circumstances to himself unknown. With such feelings, we may easily suppose how Mr Blair's sensitive mind, more especially now, enfeebled as it was by bodily illness, shrunk and recoiled from the idea of meeting the man he had so deeply injured. But, to say truth, there was so great a cloud of deeper sorrow on that anxious and shaken mind, that this was rather an occasional visitant than one of its continual burdens.

With the restoration of his bodily health, he recovered, of course, in some measure, his command over his conduct; but while there was that in him that made him feel every kind confiding look the good old Maxwell threw upon him as if it had been a dagger thrust into his heart, he was nevertheless as yet quite incapable of summoning up the courage requisite for a solemn and deliberate confession of his guilt. Hour after hour, while the pious old man sat reading aloud by his bed-side, he lay brooding over his own unseen miseries, and striving to nerve himself for disclosing what he could not endure the thought of keeping concealed. Yet, whenever he had framed his lips for uttering the fatal words, his heart died again within him, and he was fain to defer the effort, even although he in part felt that the longer it was deferred, it would in the end be the more painful.

Perhaps this continual uneasiness, harassing as it was in itself, might nevertheless be of some advantage to Mr

Blair's mind, by breaking the tenor of those profounder meditations of misery, to which we can venture no more than an allusion, — the secret miseries of a soul prostrate under the sense of spiritual abandonment. Had there been no thoughts of a less awful, however painful, nature, to disturb the deep flow of that stream of mental anguish, who shall say whether a mind such as his might not have sunk into that utmost abyss, on the brink of which it too often hovered? The weight of human sorrow, like that of human power, is broken by being divided — and in the midst of his chastisement, mercy was present with him.

Such is a very slight and superficial sketch of the state in which these two men's minds were, when they met for the first time in their lives. Mr Blair was walking very slowly on the smooth sand by the sea-shore, supported by John Maxwell's arm, and listening not to the words of comfort which the good man was whispering into his ear, but to the deep and hollow rush of the waves in their advance upon the beach, — when suddenly the sound of a horse's hoofs was heard behind them, and John, looking back, told Mr Blair that here came Uigness himself. They halted, and Captain Campbell, slackening his pace as he approached, saluted Mr Blair with very grave courtesy. Blair, on his part, with some difficulty uncovered himself to return the salutation, and displayed to Mr Campbell's eyes, a head, the hair of which had, in the course of not many days, been changed from black to gray, under the mingled influences of mental and corporeal sufferings. The suddenness with which this change had taken place, was of course unknown to Campbell; but even without being aware of that, there was enough in the appearance of Mr Blair's countenance as well as figure, to astonish one who knew the shortness of the period during which he had been confined. His mind became unconsciously more and more softened as he gazed on the wan and wasted form before him, and that face on which the darkest melancholy seemed to sit enthroned in the midst of languor and feebleness; and he felt so much

compassion, that he certainly would have passed on without speaking, had he not believed that what he had to say must tend to restore something of the tranquillity, the absence of which was so visible.

He dismounted, and placing the rein in John Maxwell's hand, requested him to pass on with the horse to a little distance, as he had something which he must say in private to Mr Blair. John, though hesitatingly, obeyed; but not until he had spread his plaid on a large stone, and seen Mr Blair seated there in safety.

As soon as John had walked fifty yards off, Captain Campbell, who had hitherto looked downwards, fixed his eyes on the pale countenance which Mr Blair had not the power at that moment to avert from his gaze, and broke silence in a tone but little above a whisper.

"Mr Blair," said he, "seeing you so imperfectly recovered, I should scarcely have stopped you, unless I had hoped to give you in so far relief. I am perfectly willing, sir, to give you my solemn assurance, that I shall not only do nothing against your character, but that I shall do whatever I can in your behalf, if need be. — Sir, you are a young man, and I believe you have already repented of your offence. I forgive you, — I forgive you, freely, sir. Go back to your own country, and guard yourself better. The grave has swallowed up all my resentment. — I hope *you* have not had so near a look of it for nothing."

Mr Blair shook from head to foot like a child, and kept his wide eyes fixed steadfastly on Campbell while he was saying this; and when he stopped, he gasped and gazed on, without being able to utter a single word.

Captain Campbell paused for a moment, and then resumed; "Sir, I am afraid I have agitated you more than I thought for. When you are left to yourself, you will remember what I have said; and remember that you may rely upon it, as much as if I had sworn by the God who hears us, whether we swear or not. Sir, I hope you will recover yourself, and not betray any thing of this new emotion to your old friend when he rejoins you. —

I have ordered a boat for you, according to what the Doctor said, and it will be ready in the morning. I wish you health, sir. — Farewell.”

With this, Campbell parted from Mr Blair, remounted his horse, and returned to the place from which he had come. John Maxwell led his trembling Minister into the house again, not suspecting any thing more than that the increased agitation he observed had been produced by the sight of a person, whose appearance could not fail to be instantly associated with the image of the buried lady. And, indeed, after a little time, Mr Blair recovered his composure in a singular degree, and gave directions about preparing all things for the voyage of the morrow, in a manner so quiet and distinct, that the kind old man heard him with feelings of refreshed hope — I had almost said of cheerfulness.

Little did John Maxwell, — little did Captain Campbell suspect, what were the secret workings of Adam Blair's mind, during the last night he spent in the tower of Uigness.

CHAPTER XX.

THEY embarked next day, beneath a warm atmosphere and a bright sunshine ; and, perhaps, it was so much the better for the convalescent man, that there was not wind enough to fill the sails of the boat in which he lay. Slowly they made their progress by the strength of oars ; and, with difficulty, reached Rothesay-bay ere the evening closed. It was another long day's voyage to Greenock ; and during the whole of the time, Mr Blair had reclined in the stern of the wherry, wrapt up from the air of the sea, and preserving the same aspect of silent dejection with which he had quitted the shore of Uigness. Nor after a time did his aged friend interrupt his meditations by many words ; for he perceived, that any answers he could extract, were things uttered merely

at random, and rightly judged, that whatever disease remained was in the mind, which must slowly work out its own cure for itself.

The third day, Mr Blair took his station in a passage-boat for Glasgow, after committing the care of the horse, which had been left all this time at Greenock, to the charge of John Maxwell,—he, on his part, rode on early in the morning, that he might reach the city in time to prepare accommodations for his Minister.

Mr Blair held little communication with any of the persons who travelled in the passage-boat along with him ; and, indeed, after a little time, shut his eyes as if asleep, that he might the better escape from their notice. As the river narrowed before him, however, it was evident that he partook in that sort of excitement which is generally diffused over any set of people, when they feel that their journey is nearly at an end. He did not, indeed, mingle in the conversation which was going on round about him, but he sat up in the stern of the boat, and every now and then fixed his eyes eagerly in the direction of the city to which he was approaching. He saw, at length, the high towers of the Minster rising far above the woods which clothe the left bank of the stream ; and from that moment, he never ceased to gaze towards them. Once or twice he rose from his seat, sat down again suddenly, and then rose again, all in the space of half a minute ; insomuch, that the man beside him, who had the direction of the helm, was obliged to request him to lessen his impatience, lest he should injure the balance of the boat, adding, that in a very short time he would be able to see the Broomielaw, without stirring from his seat.

And they soon reached that little hamlet by the riverside, which the progress of half a century has converted into a crowded line of quays in the heart of a great city. John Maxwell was already waiting for them on the pier ; and as soon as Mr Blair had stepped ashore, he informed him that he had provided a bed for him at the house he generally frequented in the High Street ; and,

in the meantime, ordered some dinner, which would be ready by the time they walked through the town. John added, that he suspected it was a Presbytery day, for that he had passed more than one of the neighbouring ministers, although none with whom he was personally acquainted. Mr Blair leaned strongly on his arm when he heard him say this, and began to walk towards the city, at a pace which, though unequal, was on the whole so rapid, that it a good deal surprised the old man.

Mr Blair was obliged to sit down and rest himself more than once before he reached the heart of the old town of Glasgow; but ascended the long street with which his journey terminated, even more swiftly than he had begun his walk. After he had entered the inn, his first questions to the landlord were, whether or not this was a day on which the Presbytery had a meeting, and if he had seen any thing of Dr Muir of Cambuslee. The man replied to both in the affirmative: he added, that the old Doctor had proceeded up the hill to the High Church some hours before, and that he expected him and the rest of the clergymen to dine in his house after their business was concluded.

The remarks which the publican and his wife made in relation to the "awful shake" Mr Blair had evidently had while he was in the Highlands, were in number, and perhaps in expression, such as might have been expected, but it did not escape Mr Blair's notice, that the looks with which these people regarded him had, in their turn, undergone some change also. The landlady in particular was visibly fluttered, and there was a chillness over the whole surface of her civility, altogether unlike what he had ever observed before in the same quarter. Mr Blair eyed the pair keenly and in silence, while he sat for about ten minutes by their fire-side, and then rising once more, said to Maxwell, "Come, John, I must have your assistance yet a little farther. I must go up the hill to the Presbytery."

"If it be not for the length of the walk," said John, "I'm sure ye'll be meikle the better for seeing your

friends all about you again ; and I'm sure they'll be as glad to see you, as you can be to see them."

With this they were leaving the inn ; but just before they passed out into the street, the landlord ran after them, and drew back John Maxwell, whispering into his ear, that he had something particular to say to him. John followed the man to a little distance, conversed with him in whispers for a few minutes, and then rejoined his Minister. When he did so, there was a burning spot on each of his old cheeks, and his lips were white as marble : but Mr Blair took not, or seemed not to take, any notice of all this, and once more leaning upon his arm, began to walk up the steep hill on the brow of which the cathedral is situated—although not with quite the same celerity of motion which had excited John's surprise a little while before. As they walked on, several persons stared very much at Mr Blair, and many stood still to look at him after he had passed them ; but he met no one who seemed to be personally acquainted with him, until he had reached the great and spacious churchyard, which lies stretched for many a rood round about the cathedral.

As they were passing over the tomb-stones towards the eastern gate of the edifice, two or three beadle or church-officers crossed their path, and Mr Blair, when he perceived how much they stared at seeing him, could not help observing to his attendant, "Surely, John, this illness has sorely changed my aspect. These people scarcely seem to know me again."

John replied, lifting his eyes hastily from the ground, "'Tis a grand place, sure enough, a very awfu' place ; but I like our ain kirk at Cross-Meikle far better, though it be nae bigger than one of the side aisles here."

In those days, the ecclesiastical courts of that district were still held in the ancient Chapter-house, a chamber of very lofty proportions, situated close to the eastern extremity of the nave, and approached through what was formerly the Lady-chapel, immediately behind the great altar of the Cathedral of Glasgow. In this now deserted

chapel, serving as a sort of anti-chamber to the Presbytery, a number of the ecclesiastical attendants were pacing backwards and forwards when they reached it ; while two or three seemed to be listening at the key-hole of the Chapter-house door. There was an evident confusion among these persons when it was discovered that Mr Blair was in the midst of them ; and when he motioned to the man nearest the door, that he wished to have admittance, this confusion rose so high, that any one must have perceived on the instant, there was some particular circumstance at the bottom of it. One or two hands were stretched out as if to prevent him from approaching the door ; but when he laid his hand on the bolt, and was just about to throw it open, one of the men drew close to him with an eager face, and whispered something which John Maxwell, although he was standing immediately behind, could not hear.

"I know it well," was Mr Blair's answer—and the words were uttered in a voice perfectly calm as well as distinct—"I know it well ; for that very cause am I here. Do you open the door for me."

The man at last obeyed ; Mr Blair, as he was turning the key, grasped John Maxwell's hand fervidly, although without looking back to him. The moment after, the door closed again, and John was left alone with these attendants.

CHAPTER XXI.

WHEN the clergymen composing the Presbytery found themselves assembled that day, it would have been evident to any one who might have been present, that their minds were occupied with something very different from the ordinary routine of their ecclesiastical business. The clerk read his minutes without being listened to by any body, and while many little matters were arranged in the usual manner among the usual functionaries, the

different members of the court were seen forming themselves into knots, and whispering together low and anxiously in various corners of the Chapter-house. At length one of the members, a tall, thin, elderly person of very formal aspect, moved that the court should be cleared, as he had to call the attention of his brethren to a subject, which, in its present state, ought to be discussed with closed doors.

When this clergyman, by name Stevenson, was satisfied that all strangers had retired, he addressed the chair in a long and elaborate speech, for the tenor of which almost all who heard him were sufficiently prepared before he opened his lips. He expatiated at great length on his own unwillingness at all times to open his ears to scandal, more particularly against the character of any of his hitherto respected brethren, — explained, however, that, under certain circumstances, it was every man's duty to overcome his private feelings, — and then entered into a serious, circumstantial detail of the many rumours which had been for some time afloat, concerning the conduct of Mr Blair of Cross-Meikle. He concluded with moving a string of resolutions, which he held written out on a card in his hand — the general purport of which was, that the scandal concerning this member of their court had already amounted to what, in the ecclesiastical phraseology of Scotland, goes under the name of a *Fama Clamosa*; and that, therefore, it was the bounden duty of the Presbytery to take up the matter *quam primum*, and appoint a committee, with powers to commence a *precognition* — and that such and such persons ought to constitute the committee in question. His motion was instantly seconded by another person on the same side of the house, who, however, in doing so, expressed his own firm belief that there was no foundation whatever for the allegations too publicly circulated against Mr Blair, and that, on a proper investigation, (which, for the sake of Mr Blair himself, ought to take place without any farther delay,) it would become manifest to all, that a few casual imprudencies, misinterpreted

by the malicious, were all that could be laid to his charge. He concluded with an eulogium on Mr Blair's previous character and conduct, both of which, he said, had always been regarded with the deepest respect, even by those who differed most widely from him in opinion as to matters of inferior moment — and by none more so than himself.

When this speaker sat down, there ensued a pause of some moments, during which, those on the opposite side of the room (the same among whom Mr Blair himself usually sat) were seen consulting among themselves, as if anxious, and yet hesitating, to make some reply. Dr Muir, who happened to be the Moderator of the Presbytery, and of course had his seat apart from any of the other clergymen, continued for some time looking towards them, and at last he rose up, and requested one of their number to relieve him, for a moment, from the duties of the chair.

As soon as he had quitted the desk, the old man, still standing in the open space in the centre of the room, threw his eyes eagerly round him, and began to speak of the matter which had been brought before their notice, characterizing as rash and imprudent, in the highest degree, the conduct of those who had broached such a subject in the absence of the person most immediately concerned in it, and fervidly expressing his own utter contempt of the rumours they had heard of, and his most sincere conviction, (for such it was,) that the pure and stainless character of Mr Blair had been assailed in consequence of nothing but the malice of one individual, whose name need only be mentioned in order to satisfy the Presbytery with how much caution they ought to proceed upon this occasion. — He then sunk into a lower but not a less serious tone, and — after desiring his brethren, with the authority which years and superior talents alone can bestow, to banish all thoughts of party in considering an assault which might have been made with equal success, as well as, he firmly believed, with equal justice, against any one of all who heard him — the old man proceeded to relate the

substance of the conversation he had himself held with Mr Blair the night before he left Cross-Meikle, and the solemn denial of the alleged guilt which he had then received from the lips of his young friend. Dr Muir himself felt, as he went on, that what he said was producing a powerful effect, and he therefore opened himself more and more freely, and reviewing the whole course of Mr Blair's existence, dared any one present to avow his belief, that even if he had been capable of offending in the manner imputed to him, he could have been so of telling a deliberate and an uncalled-for LIE. "Sirs," said he, "I put it to all of you, whether you do not feel and know that Adam Blair is innocent; and is it thus, that while we are ourselves convinced of his innocence, we are rashly, hastily, sinfully to injure our brother, by countenancing the clamours of the ignorant, and the malicious, and the ungodly, in his absence? Would to God that he were present with us this day, that he might have done for himself effectually, what a feeble old man has rather the will than the power to do for him."

Dr Muir was speaking fervently in this strain, and the visible emotion of a man who generally controlled and concealed his more ardent feelings, was kindling even the coldest who listened into congenial warmth, when the door of the Chapter-house opened, and in walked Adam Blair himself. Every eye being fixed steadfastly upon the impassioned speaker, the entrance of a stranger was not for a few moments observed by a single person there; and indeed Dr Muir himself never suspected what had happened, until the pale and altered man was standing at the distance of three or four paces right in front of him. He stopped in the midst of the sentence, and gazed for a moment in silence, first upon him, and then upon the audience — and then suddenly resuming all the fervour of his tone, said these words, "I thank my God! — Adam Blair, speak, look up, let them hear your voice. Speak solemnly, in the hearing of God and your brethren! — Adam, are you guilty, or not guilty, of this uncleanness?"

The unhappy Blair, laying his hand upon his breast, answered quickly and clearly, "Call me no more your brother — I am a fallen man. — I am guilty."

Every pulse shook beneath the tone of that voice — but Dr Muir groaned aloud ere he made answer. "Fallen, indeed, Adam Blair, — woe is me — doubly, trebly fallen! Do you remember the words you said to me when I spake with you in private?"

"I do — and they were true. *Then* I deceived not you, but myself. *Now*, no one is deceived."

The old man covered his face with his hands, and flung himself backwards upon his seat, while all the rest continued silent, speechless, staring upon the countenance of Blair.

It was he himself who broke once more the silence of their assembly: "I call you no longer my brethren — let me still call you, though unworthy, my friends: let me still partake your prayers. — Pray for me; — I dare not pray for myself. The God that hath abandoned me will hear your prayers."

At these words Dr Muir uncovered his face, and fixing his eyes once more on the unfortunate, continued, for some moments, to regard him in silence, like all the rest. A big tear rolled over his cheek, but he brushed it hastily away ere he said, "Adam Blair, you have been ill. You have been ill in the body. But a few days ago your hair was black, and now it is as gray as mine; your cheek is white, your strength is gone." He started to his feet as he continued — "Our brother has been visited with much sickness. Perchance his mind also has been shaken."

"It has, it has," muttered several voices.

Mr Blair looked all around him, and, for the first time, the water stood in his eye, as he replied, "Body and mind have been shaken, but it is not as you would too kindly persuade yourselves. Oh, sirs! — I have spoken the truth. I came hither to speak it. What hope of peace or mercy could I have until I had spoken the truth, and resigned my office into the hands of God's servants?"

— I do now resign it. — My ancestors were peasants, and I return to their lot — would I were worthy of them ! — once more, I demand your prayers. Refuse not my parting request.”

The whole assembly remained, once more, fixed in silence. Dr Muir, still erect in front of Blair, surveyed them all round and round ; and then saying, “ Brethren, I read your thoughts,” fell down upon his knees. They all knelt at the same moment ; and Blair, weeping like an infant, knelt also in the midst of them, and stooped his forehead to the dust.

CHAPTER XXII.

THOSE who know what were the habitudes and feelings of the religious and virtuous peasantry of the west of Scotland half a century ago, can need little explanation of the immediate effects of the things which have been narrated in the last chapter, upon the inhabitants of Cross-Meikle. A deep and painful shock was given to every simple bosom among them, and the fall and deposition of their minister were things of which all thought, but of which very many were never heard to speak. The service of the church was, of course, suspended during a considerable series of weeks ; and thus, the chief opportunity which the country people commonly had of meeting together in numbers, was taken away from them. As, however, the very particular circumstances which had attended Mr Blair’s degradation, were soon as universally known as the degradation itself, there can be little difficulty in supposing, that, in spite of all the horror with which that primitive people regarded the offence of which their minister had been guilty, there gradually mingled in their feelings as to himself, a large share of commiseration — not to say of sympathy. Nor can it be doubted that the manner in which John Maxwell hesitated not to express himself whenever he was

compelled to speak (and it was then only he would speak) upon the subject — venerable as this man was in years and character — exerted a very powerful influence over the minds both of those with whom he was personally intimate, and of others who heard the report of his conversation.

Meantime, there was no one in the parish who knew, or seemed to know, for a considerable time, what had become of the unhappy man himself. He had avoided being seen by any one who was acquainted with him during the evening which followed his resignation of his office ; and although several made inquiry after him next day, at the place where he slept, the people of that house could tell nothing, but that he had sold his horse to the landlord, and gone off alone, and on foot, they knew not whither, at an early hour of morning. This sudden and unexplained disappearance excited many anxious thoughts among those who, notwithstanding his fall, still continued to feel some interest as to the fate of Blair ; and these, it has already been hinted, were far from being few.

There was but one person in that neighbourhood who was really aware of Blair's place of retreat, and of the nature of the plan which he had sketched out for the future course of his life ; and that person (it was Dr Muir) had received, along with the information he possessed, the strictest injunctions to keep it as far as was possible to himself. Mrs Semple of Semplehaugh, indeed, made no secret that she had received a letter from Mr Blair, dated at Glasgow the same day he had appeared before his Presbytery ; but as to its contents, she made no communication, even to the members of her own family. The daughter of the deposed clergyman remained, however, under her roof, and continued to be treated with the very same marks of kindness as before. There were not wanting some ladies, and gentlemen, too, of Mrs Semple's acquaintance, who thought fit to express some little surprise, — perhaps even some little indignation, when they were informed of this last cir-

cumstance ; but none of those persons were so bold as to say a word of the matter in the presence of the good Dowager. The innocent child herself was told by the old Lady, that her papa had been very unwell, but that he was getting better, and she should soon see him again ; and, of course, suspected nothing of the true cause of his continued absence from Cross-Meikle. By and by, however, it became necessary that she should be farther informed ; and she was by degrees led to believe, that her father had sunk into a state of health so feeble, as to render it unlikely that he should be able to resume the duties of his clerical office. Often after she had been made to understand this, the poor child would be found weeping alone in some remote corner of the house ; and, in truth, it was more easy for Mrs Semple to weep along with her than to bid her dry her tears.

Dr Muir was, in the meantime, not negligent in complying with the requests with which Blair had ventured to trouble him. He disposed of the furniture of the Manse to Mr Jamieson, who, it was soon announced, had received Mr Semple's presentation to the living—retaining nothing but a few of the simplest articles, and some two or three dozens of volumes out of the library. He paid off and dismissed the other servants ; but transferred to his own household the old man who has already been mentioned, and who had spent the greater part of his life in the service of Mr Blair and his father.

These arrangements it was easy to make without attracting much notice, except among the persons more immediately concerned in them ; but Dr Muir had other matters to attend to, which could not fail to excite the curiosity of Blair's late parishioners in general.

It has already been mentioned more than once, that Mr Blair's grandfather had lived the life of a peasant in the parish, of which two of his descendants became ministers in the sequel. The two or three acres of land which had formed this old man's patrimony, and by the cultivation of which he, like all his forefathers, had subsisted, still remained in the possession of the family ;

but for a long time they had been let to the occupier of a considerable farm immediately adjoining; and the humble cottage, which stood among five or six ancient ashes and willows in the midst of Blair's paternal field at Sargard, had for many years been uninhabited, and all but a ruin. Now, however, it soon became known, that the farmer had given up the remainder of his lease into Dr Muir's hands, and that, under the Doctor's directions, the walls and roof of the old cottage were about to receive some repairs. And from the time when these circumstances transpired, it came to be pretty generally surmised, that the fallen man intended either soon, or, at least, at some future period, to take up his residence in the long deserted dwelling of the old Adam Blair.

It was a simple matter to restore that lowly dwelling to all that it had ever been. In the course of a very few days, a new roof of thatch replaced that which had for years become pervious to the rain; the crevices in the eastern gable were filled up, and the windows, which had been wide to the blast, received new casements. The interior accommodation consisted of but two very small apartments, the one opening off the other; and these, perhaps, had never been so well furnished as they were now, when the few things which had not been disposed of to Mr Blair's successor had been removed thither from the Manse of Cross-Meikle. As Dr Muir was riding over one day to inspect what had been done in these matters, it occurred to him, for the first time, that he had neglected to give any orders about redigging and reinclosing the little old garden behind the house. But when he reached the place, he found that some one had anticipated all his wishes. The hedge had been trimmed, and all its gaps filled up. The whole of the soil had been carefully trenched; the turfen walk down the centre pared and shaven; the deserted willow arbour, at the extremity nearest the stream, had once more resumed its shape; and many new slips of such plants as in those days constituted the wealth of the Scots

cottar's *potager*, had been recently arranged by the hand of some experienced gardener. The Doctor inquired by whom all this had been done; but all the people who had repaired the roof could tell him was, that none of them had meddled with these things. He called, on his way to Cambuslee, on the farmer who had tenanted the field, and asked him also whether he had done any thing as to the garden. The man replied that he had not done so, nor heard of any thing being done: but added, after a pause of a few moments, that he had seen old John Maxwell the Elder passing his door of late very early in the morning.

The truth is, that John and his son had risen before the dawn of day for some seven or eight mornings, and laboured together in a work, of which, although they wished to do it in secret, they neither were nor had any reason to be ashamed.

One evening, about the close of the autumn, Dr Muir came to Semplehaugh-house, and having said a few words in a whisper to the old lady, took little Sarah Blair in his hand, and walked with her towards the cottage of Sargard. He prepared the child, as they went, for meeting her father — knocked at the door — saw her enter — and withdrew without witnessing their interview.

By this time, Mr Jamieson had been, for several weeks, exercising the office of the ministry at Cross-Meikle; and although neither his personal manners, nor his style of preaching, were exactly of the sort most likely to be in favour with the country people, the events which had happened in that parish had taught some lessons of humility to young and old, and the new clergyman was, on the whole, meriting and receiving the respectful attention of those committed to his trust. The circumstances under which he had come to the living were such, that he must have been a very foolish man indeed, had he not been modest in all his demeanour. And Mr Jamieson, though by nature a person neither of warm feelings, nor of very profound under-

standing, had both feeling and sense to conduct himself quite as he ought to have done in a situation, which we must admit to have been of very extraordinary delicacy.

Next day being Sunday, the Minister of Cross-Meikle walked as usual through his congregation in the church-yard, and they had all followed him into the church and taken their places, and he had just begun to read the words of the Psalm, with which the service was to commence, when Adam Blair, with his child in his hand, entered by a side-door, and walking forwards slowly, without once taking his eyes from off the ground, seated himself opposite to the Clergyman, in the darkest and remotest corner of the western aisle. Every eye followed him to his place; and not a few of them were suffused with tears, as the fallen man was seen turning, with an unsteady hand, the leaves of his Bible, and pointing out to his daughter the passage the Minister was reading. But, after the first moment—such is the grace of that natural courtesy which politeness never surpasses, and seldom equals—there was not one grown up person there who did not endeavour to avoid looking towards the corner in which Adam Blair had taken refuge. The children only of the congregation, kept gazing all the while upon him—and there was a superstitious terror in some of those young eyes, which shewed how deep an impression had been made by the few broken and mysterious hints they had heard—about the guilt, the punishment, the penitence of him, whom from infancy they had been taught to look upon as the pattern of all excellence.

Adam Blair sat with his head bowed down; but when they began to sing, he was heard joining in the Psalm, with low and trembling notes, while the clear shrill voice of his child rose from beside him in a stream of gladsome melody. It is difficult to say which of those sounds sent the deeper thrill into the ears that heard them.

In like manner, throughout the whole of the service, Mr Blair continued to keep his eyes fixed upon the

ground. When the final blessing had been pronounced, he sat down again in his place, and remained there until the last of the congregation had quitted the church, and then walked out with his child in his hand as he had entered. In general, it is the custom of the Scots peasantry to linger a good while together in their churchyards after the termination of public worship, — and here, as elsewhere, the practice uniformly prevailed. That day, however, this custom lacked observance. When Blair and Sarah came forth, young and old had already passed beyond the elms which encircle the burial-ground. The child gazed round, as if wondering that no one drew near to speak to them, and instinctively she led her father a few steps in the direction of the Manse. But Mr Blair said to her, “My love, we are going the wrong way ; we must go home to Sargard.”

“Papa,” said she, “I like the Manse better. The Manse is a far bonnier place, and what for should we no gae back to the Manse?”

“My poor bairn,” he replied, “you cannot understand this. I am not the same man that I was.”

“But you’ll soon be weel again, papa, and we’ll gae back to the Manse when the bonny summer days come round again.”

Blair allowed the child to prattle as she pleased ; halted with her for a moment beside her mother’s tomb, and then walked slowly, and with a composed aspect, along the narrow and winding lane which leads from Cross-Meikle to the banks of the streamlet on which Sargard lies.

After his child had gone to rest that evening, he laid down the book he had been reading, and walked forth by himself in the twilight. I know not whether, when he passed his threshold, he had made up his mind as to the direction in which he would go ; but so it was, that he wandered over the fields until he had come very near the place where John Maxwell lived.

In those days it was the custom of many of our godly peasants, and among the rest it was the custom of John

Maxwell, to pray aloud out of doors, morning and evening. The smallness of their houses, and the impossibility of finding places of retirement within these, had probably led at first to this practice, and it did not then enter into the mind of any body to connect its observance with any notions of pharisaical display.

When Mr Blair, therefore, had come within a few paces of the old beechen hedge at the foot of this man's garden, it was not with surprise that he heard his voice among the shade. He knew, from the low, fervid solemnity of the sounds he was uttering, that they were addressed to no human ear, and he drew back to some little distance that he might not be, by accident, an intruder upon the secret of that privacy—but stood still, within reach of the sound, until he was satisfied that the good old man had made an end of his prayer. He then approached more nearly, and opening the wicket, had gone up close to John Maxwell ere he was aware of his approach.

The old man gazed in his face in silence for some space, and then received him in his arms. — “My son,” said he, “God hath chastened severely. — You have kissed the rod.”

“I kiss the rod,” answered Adam Blair; “this day my bosom hath shaken off something of its load. I have at last been seen by the eyes of my people. I have sinned against them, yet I see that they pity me.”

“We have all wept for you, Mr Adam; — this day, I hope — almost, I rejoice.”

“Some light at length breaks my darkness. — John Maxwell, you are my friend, what must I do?”

“My son, God will enlighten; his Word is our only lamp. Hitherto you have done well.”

So saying, the old man led Mr Blair towards the door of his house, and he followed him beneath its roof without hesitation. Young Maxwell and his wife received him at first with some awkwardness; but the humbled man constrained himself, and after the first barriers were broken, the conversation flowed easily, although he modestly spoke far less than the rest. He knelt with

them at their social devotions, and shared their meal, and said, as he rose to withdraw, "My friends, I thank you for your kindness. Would I were worthy to live among you, as my fathers did!"

The next morning's sun had scarcely sent its first rays into the valley, ere Adam Blair was up and in the field. He laboured for many hours alone, and ate and drank cheerfully at evening with Sarah — his only hand-maid — his only household. The fire was then blown into a blaze upon the hearth, and the father resumed his old occupation and delight in hearing and instructing his child. The toil of the day had prepared him for repose, and he retired early to bed, where once more healthful slumbers awaited him.

Humble, silent, laborious, penitent, devout — it was so that Adam Blair began the life of a peasant. Seldom, except on the Sabbath day, did he for many months quit the narrow precincts of the field to which he had returned. He was poor, but his hands could win him bread; he was fallen, but he repined not at his fall. His former associates came not near him, but he had reason to believe that they did not stay away from unkindness. His beautiful child smiled upon him in his solitude; and from day to day his heart acquired strength to endure all the bitterness it had pleased God to mingle in his cup of existence.

CHAPTER XXIII.

LET the reader imagine for himself what might be the natural effects of this lonely life of penitence and labour, persisted in, without deviation, during a period of ten long years — and then come with me to the conclusion of this story.

By this time Sarah Blair had ripened into womanhood, and was the most beautiful girl in that part of the country. She was seldom seen beyond the little valley

in which her father's cottage was situated, and almost never apart from her father, to whom she was evidently devoted in the whole depth of her affections. It has already been said, that she was his only hand-maid : throughout all this course of years she had performed the humblest offices about his humble habitation : nevertheless, her mind had been cultivated and improved, it is not improbable, much beyond what it might have been, had she lived in the midst of the society of which she seemed to have been born to form the ornament ; and her demeanour, amidst an excess of bashfulness, betrayed abundantly the elegance of her mind. She was extremely shy and reserved, if, at any time, she was thrown under the observation of strangers ; but at home, when alone with her father, a sober maiden-like cheerfulness sat on her brow. In solitude she was a melancholy girl — and no wonder — for, by slow, very slow degrees, as her understanding opened with her years, and the power of observation grew along with the capacity of feeling, Sarah, pure and innocent as she was, had divined something of the cause of her father's altered condition in life. One of the first discoveries she had made, and indeed she had made this long before she ceased to be a child, was, that the mention of a certain name never failed to produce a momentary shudder in Mr Blair's bodily frame, and she had very soon desisted from doing what she found to be invariably connected with this painful consequence. Her father's own broken and mysterious expressions of humility had, by some accident, come to be linked in her mind with the idea of that forbidden name ; and, perhaps, in the course of so many years, she might casually have heard something drop in conversation from some of the neighbouring peasantry, sufficient, if aught was wanting, to supply the defect in her own train of associations. A pensive gloom, therefore, hung upon her lovely countenance — and was dispelled only when she exerted herself in presence of her father, or constrained herself before the eyes of others.

Adam Blair, on the other hand, had for a long time recovered, amidst the healthful exercises of the field, the original strength and activity of his person. His hair, which had become tinged with untimely grey, was now almost entirely white: beneath the sun and the wind, his countenance had assumed a hue of deep rustic brown; but his eye had recovered, if not all its youthful brightness, at least all the serenity of his earlier manhood. His dress had long been the same with that of the people into whose rank he had descended; but the suit of village grey he wore, was always perfectly neat; — every thread of it had been woven by his daughter's fingers, as she sat by his side during the long days and nights of the dark and solitary season of the year. In all his outward appearance, Adam Blair was a peasant living among peasants.

After two or three years of his penance had gone over his head, he received a letter from Mrs Semple, inviting him to come and see her, with his daughter, at Semplehaugh. He handed the letter to Sarah, and after she had read it, said, "My child, I see what you would say: I shall write to Mrs Semple immediately." — He did so; he expressed great gratitude to the Lady for the return of her good opinion — and the deepest sense of all the kindness he and his family had in former days received at her hands; — but concluded with requesting, that he and his daughter might be excused from again mingling in society which no longer became their condition in life. — The Lady of Semplehaugh appreciated Blair's humility; and though she subsequently took many ways to shew that she still kept her eye of kindness upon them both, she never afterwards obtruded any offer of personal communication upon them. She respected them and their lowly retirement, and said to herself, that the time had not yet come.

Several years had elapsed after this communication took place, when Mr Blair, as he was digging one beautiful spring morning in his garden, received a message

from his ancient friend Dr Muir, which immediately stopt him in his labour. The old man had for some months been unable to leave his own house ; but although Mr Blair was aware of the increase of his infirmities, he was not prepared for hearing, as he now did, that the last energies of nature were at last entirely exhausted ; and that neither he nor his medical attendants expected he could outlive two days more. The dying man expressed an earnest desire to have some conversation that morning with Adam Blair ; and he, under such circumstances, was not likely to require a second bidding.

He quitted his spade, therefore, and having told the news he had heard to his daughter, immediately accompanied Dr Muir's servant to Cambuslee, which lies at about the distance of six miles from Sargard on the other side of the river.

When he approached the Manse, he saw Mrs Semple's carriage in waiting near the entrance, and his first impulse when he observed it, was to walk aside for some time, and defer his visit until hers should have been finished ; and indeed he had already turned himself from the house, and begun to retrace his steps towards the neighbouring wood, when he heard himself called upon by name from behind. It was Mrs Semple herself, who was looking towards him from one of the upper windows of the Manse — and she instantly repeated her address in a tone which took from him all thought of disobeying it. Slowly, therefore, he drew near ; and when he had stepped over the threshold, the same domestic who had conducted him beckoned to him from above, and led him on to the door of the chamber in which his master was lying.

When he entered, he found himself not in a dark place, as chambers of sickness are used to be ; the windows of the room were both of them wide open, not only to the light but to the air. Mrs Semple was alone with the old man, sitting by the side of his bed, and watching over him, while, as it seemed, he slept. She

extended her hand to Mr Blair, and he advanced, treading softly, no longer hesitating to receive the symbol of kindness. Dr Muir opened his eyes at the same moment, and fixing them upon Mr Blair, while a faint smile passed over his lips, said in a low but audible whisper, "This is right — this is quite right. I bless God that I have lived to see this day. Adam Blair, my son, draw near, and kiss my lips ere I die."

He obeyed in silence, and immediately the dying man resumed: "Adam, your two old friends have been both thinking and speaking of you this morning ere you came. It has pleased God to be very merciful to you and to us all. You must promise not to resist in that which we have designed for your good, and the good of many. You must come back to the vineyard. You will be a better labourer in it now than you were in your best young days."

"I am not worthy," said Blair, — "I am contented where I am — I fear change."

"Adam Blair, I shall not see yon sun go down. I would fain leave my people in your hands."

Mrs Semple whispered earnestly into his ear at the same instant, "Yes, Mr Blair, the time is come; you will not hang back when all unite in entreating you."

Mr Blair bowed himself low, and answered — "You are both too good — too kind; but I know myself, and I know my place. Permit me to die in my cottage. I have tried both, and that lowly life is the better for me."

Having said this, he withdrew towards the window and seated himself there, apart from his friends. Dr Muir kept his eyes upon him for a moment, and then whispered something he could not hear to Mrs Semple. She replied, and they conversed together for some time in the same manner. After which, the old man beckoned Mr Blair once more to approach his bed — and when he had done so, he made him kiss him once more, and then said, "My friends, you must now leave me. Adam

Blair, there is one thing you will not refuse me. My child is far away from me. I have no kinsman near — you will lay my head in the grave.” He added, after a brief pause, “I see you will obey me — and now, God bless you, God bless you both — I would fain turn my face to the wall. *Now* I fain would be alone.”

They left the good man, as he desired, and waited in silence together below, until it was announced to them that all was over. Mrs Semple stood by Blair, while he closed the good man’s eyelids.

CHAPTER XXIV.

MR BLAIR discharged the duty bequeathed to him by this venerable man’s parting breath, amidst a numerous assemblage of the neighbouring gentry, and of the whole members of the Presbytery to which the parishes of Cambuslee and Cross-Meikle belonged. He received their salutations with modesty, but without any apparent awkwardness ; and parting from them at the churchyard, walked home to his cottage.

His daughter and he were sitting together quietly by the fireside the same evening, when a knock came to the door. Sarah rose and opened it, and in a few moments, the cottage was quite filled with the same clergymen who had been present at the funeral. Mr Blair stood up to receive them ; but he had not time to ask them the purpose of their visit ere the eldest of those who had come, addressed him in these words : —

“Mr Blair, your brethren have come to speak with you on a very solemn subject ; but there is no occasion why your daughter should not hear what we have to say. It appears that our departed father, Dr Muir, had expressed a strong wish, that you, being reinstated in the ministry, should succeed him at Cambuslee, — and that the family who have the patronage of that parish, were

exceedingly anxious that his dying request to this effect might be complied with. You, however, have declined to accede to their wishes. We, your brethren, have this day held a conference with the family at Semplehaugh ; and another arrangement is now proposed to you by them through us. If Mr Jamieson becomes Minister of Cambuslee, will you return to your own old place? Will you once more set your hand to God's work here at Cross-Meikle?"

Mr Blair's daughter turned aside and wept when she heard these words ; but he himself stood for a moment in silence before them. It was then that John Maxwell, who had been bed-ridden for three years, was borne in a chair into the midst of the assembly, and said, " Mr Blair, we, the Elders of Cross-Meikle, are all present. We are all of the same mind. Oh, sir, fear not! we have all witnessed the purification ! let me not die until I have seen you once more in your father's place!"

The tears at length gushed over a face that had been long too calm for tears ; and Mr Blair, altogether overpowered, submitted himself to the will of his brethren. His friends perceived that he would fain be left alone, and they all departed. Sarah rushed into his arms and wept, but not bitterly.

A moment afterwards, she also withdrew, and Blair was left alone to meditate upon his pillow concerning all these things, and concerning more than these.

CHAPTER XXV.

SHORTLY after, the necessary formalities having been complied with, Mr Blair resumed his office, and he continued, during a long series of years, to discharge all its duties in the midst of an affectionate and confiding people. He did so, however, with a modesty — a humility, such as became one that had passed through such

scenes as I have attempted to narrate ; and one thing, in particular, did not fail to make a very strong impression among the people of his flock.

In those days, persons guilty of offences against the discipline of the church, were uniformly, after confession, and expression of penitence, rebuked from the pulpit after divine service on Sunday in presence of the congregation. Whenever Mr Blair had occasion to discharge this duty, which is, perhaps, under any circumstances, one of the most painful that fall to the lot of the parish priest, he did it with deep and earnest simplicity ; but he never failed to commence his address to the penitent before him, by reminding him, and all present, of his own sin and its consequences. I have said that this produced a strong and powerful impression on the minds of his people ; I might have said, with equal truth, that it exerted a most salutary influence upon their conduct. That primitive race were generous enough to sympathise with generosity, and I believe not few among them found an additional safeguard against guilt in the feeling, that by their guilt, the old but deep wounds might be reopened in the bosom of a man, whose own errors, fatal as they were, and fatal in their effects, they had unconsciously come to look upon somewhat in the light of a mysterious and inscrutable infliction, rather than of common human frailty.

In the midst of this kind people, Mr Blair at last closed his eyes upon all earthly scenes, after he had laboured among them during a space of not less than twenty years after his restoration. His daughter, fair and lovely as she was, had, in her time, received the addresses of many wooers, but she never would listen to any of them — continuing to devote herself in all things to her father. Soon after his death, she retired once more to the Glen of Sargard, the lowly cottage of which she had not ceased to visit from time to time, with a view, it may be supposed, to that which she executed in the sequel.

Sarah Blair spent the evening of her days in calmness, meriting and receiving every species of attention at the hands of her late father's parishioners. Not many years have passed since she died. With her, the race of the Blairs in that parish ended — but not their memory.

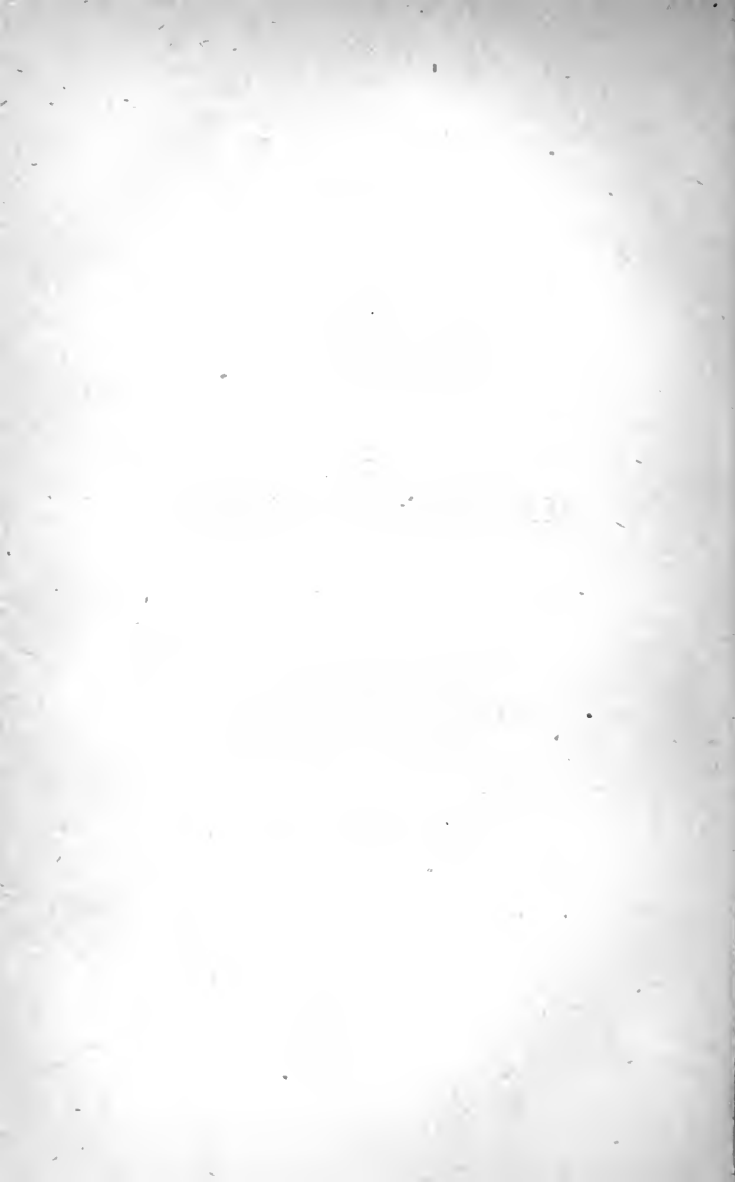
I have told a TRUE STORY. I hope the days are yet far distant when it shall be doubted in Scotland that such things might have been.

THE END OF ADAM BLAIR.

THE HISTORY
OF
MATTHEW WALD.

We talked with open heart, and tongue
Affectionate and true;
A pair of friends, though I was young,
And Matthew seventy-two.

WORDSWORTH.



THE HISTORY

OR

MATTHEW WALD.

CHAPTER I.

I NEED not begin this story, my dear, since it is addressed only to you, with a full account of my pedigree. You know the antiquity of the family, with which you are so closely connected. You are aware that we came into Scotland towards the middle of that interesting period, which learned people talk of under the name of "the Anglo-Saxon colonization." In fact, the tree was Norman originally, and had scarcely taken root in England ere it was transplanted hither — where, upon the whole, it may be said to have thriven. The estate which my ancestor received from King Robert's bounty was not indeed large, but one or two prudent marriages augmented it considerably in the course of the century; and as the father and eldest son always adhered to the ancient rule of taking different sides on every occasion of public tumult and political dissention, while the younger branches were invariably portioned off with a sword or a crucifix, there was little chance of the barony's suffering

any remarkable curtailment during several subsequent ages. We were so lucky as to see through all the abominable errors of the Popish system earlier than most of our neighbours, and our timely conversion was not unrewarded even in this world. We were also good enough to stick by the Covenant, so that although the estate was given to an English officer in 1679, we recovered it in 1688, much improved by the management he had bestowed on it. Besides hedges and ditches, before unimagined, he had built a good house, and furnished it in a handsome manner ; and I have even heard it whispered, that there was some money in the cabinet, which he never had any opportunity of claiming, otherwise than by letters from Spain, — for the gentleman was pleased to take service in that country immediately after the Revolution. At the commencement of the last century, then, our affairs may be said to have been rather in a prosperous condition.

My grandfather in due time succeeded to the property ; — gave his hand to a young lady of great merit, who happened to be heiress of a farm that had often and often been talked of as lying in to the estate, and was now (it was indeed high time) legally united to it for ever ; and in process of time begat a great many more sons and daughters than would have been at all consistent with prudence, had vaccination or cleanliness been at that period naturalized in our part of the globe.

They all died young, except John, Matthew, and Dorothy. The cadet was my father ; and I need not inform you that you have the honour to be the lady's grandson.

As little need I tell you that The Union was, at the time when it took place, and long after indeed, extremely unpopular in this part of the island. Some few approved of it from the beginning, because they were shrewd enough to foresee the benefits which it has eventually conferred upon commerce and younger brothers, and many more supported and applauded it for reasons of a more private nature. My grandfather despised the name

of traffic, would have preferred to see five sons in their shrouds rather than one Wald in a furred gown and gold chain, and was too inconsiderable a person to be bribed, so that his voice was with the majority. And in this faith he religiously educated his children.

John, the first hope of the house, adhered to his father's prejudices ; so firmly, indeed, that he even pushed matters considerably farther than the old gentleman's nerves would have approved of. In short, my uncle was one of those excellent protestants and patriots who quite forgot James II., in the immediate contemplation of Scotland degraded to a province of England. My father, on the other hand, was a soldier and a stout Hanoverian ; and the two brothers first argued, then quarrelled, and ended with avoiding each other in calm and deliberate aversion. They had, though living scarcely ten miles apart, refrained entirely from visiting each other during the three or four years that preceded my birth.

Both were men of stern temper and high passions. Each had married, each had become a parent — one (my father) had lost a wife in the interim ; yet neither had, in joy or in sorrow, made the least advance towards a reconciliation. The two proud men were become strangers ; they had hardened their hearts, and erased, to all appearance, every trace of sympathy.

My father had heard, without surprise, that the Laird had joined Charles Edward at Edinburgh, and gone with the Highland army into England. He had heard also, that this proceeding was extremely disagreeable to his brother's wife, who, being a lady of the west country, abhorred the names of Pope and Pretender from her cradle ; and who, moreover, was said to be, at this particular time, far advanced in a condition, which, however interesting and amiable, has never been celebrated for disarming contradiction of its sting.

At last came the full accounts of the catastrophe at Culloden. My father learned that his brother's corps had been almost entirely put to the sword, and nobody dreamt that he, a man in all situations distinguished for

violence of temperament, could have escaped the slaughter — unless, indeed, he had been disabled and made prisoner; a fate which, considering his station in life, and the feelings of an exasperated government, it was impossible not to regard as more cruel than any other.

The *second* day after he heard this news, my father mounted his horse and rode across the country, with a single servant, to Blackford. He found the house entirely deserted and shut up; and, calling on the minister of the parish, was informed that the lady had removed to Edinburgh two or three weeks ago, with her infant daughter, in the utmost distress of mind. — The total desolation of the old place affected the Captain a good deal, and he came home at night-fall in a gloomy mood.

The night, as it happened, set in wet and stormy after his return. He had supped, and was sitting alone by the fireside about eleven o'clock, when he heard some noise at the window; he thought it was the plashing of the rain, and did not turn round until the knock was repeated. The shutters were not closed, and he saw distinctly a human figure — pale, haggard, motionless, with a long beard and a grisly gash upon the brow. At the first glance he knew it was Blackford, but he stared for a moment without rising from his chair, for it was his belief that his brother was no longer in life.

The Laird threw up the window, however, and my father assisted him into the room. He staggered into his embrace without saying any thing; and several minutes elapsed ere my father perceived what was the reality of the case. The poor man had been wounded on the head, and the subsequent exposure and hardship he had undergone had at last quite unshaken his mind. He eat and drank voraciously, (they had not presence of mind to restrain this,) talked incoherently and wildly of his family and the battle; in short, became utterly delirious, — and died in that state in the course of the next day. I have a distinct recollection, young as I was, of my uncle's funeral leaving the house. I suppose I had cried in my bed, and the maid carried me to the window be-

cause she was resolved not to lose the sight herself. I remember the dark stormy night, and several figures on horseback, with torches in their hands, about a cart. They carried him to the vault at Blackford, and it was not thought prudent to do this in the day time.

Some days after, an embroidered cap and a silk handkerchief were found in the bog, about a mile behind our house ; and from different circumstances which subsequently came to my father's knowledge, he was convinced that his brother had been concealed there for two entire nights before he made his appearance at the window. If this was really the case, it is impossible to imagine any thing more miserable — at least I have seen a good many bogs in my time, and certainly none to compare to that. I cannot suppose that a snipe ever stayed willingly four-and-twenty hours within its verge.

When you go to that part of the world, they will shew you, if you have any curiosity, the very spot where the Laird's nightcap was found. As for the relic itself, it is now in my possession, and a very pretty nightcap, I assure you, it has been — nothing less than green satin, and silver flowers. A heart *proper*, stuck through with darts and arrows, adorns the middle of the crown ; from which I conclude that the finery had originally been donned in honour of his wedding-night.

CHAPTER II.

My father, having distinguished himself on more occasions than one when in the army, and retired from it only in consequence of losing his right arm at Portobello, was possessed of influence enough to obtain for himself a free gift (fees of office not included) of his brother's forfeited estate from the King. The house which he had hitherto occupied was a hired one, and he now removed to Blackford — not, however, until he had gone to Edinburgh, and invited his brother's widow to come and place herself

and her child there under his protection. I remember something of our *fitting*, but cannot pretend that I have any *first impressions* about my aunt at your service. I grew up from the verge of infancy under her eye, and should as soon think of saying what my earliest notions were about my own father.

She was only five-and-twenty when her husband died ; yet I cannot recall any time at which I did not regard her as an old woman. The widow's costume, no doubt, must bear the chief blame of this ; for she that looks young in that abominable close coif and mufflers must indeed be a Hebe. But it is not to be denied, that this lady preserved, during the first years of our acquaintance, a steady coldness, reserve, and mortification of aspect and demeanour, more than sufficient, even if she had been arrayed in all the colours of the rainbow, to impress eyes so young as mine with all the notion of antiquity.

It is certain, that, upon the whole, the Captain and his sister-in-law, agreed very well together in the conduct of their joint *menage* ; but it is also certain, that, although little Katharine found a father in mine, I never felt as if I possessed a mother in hers. Every sort of care was bestowed on me, and every appearance of kindness ; but it is impossible to deceive a child in some things. I always, from the very beginning, (at least I now think so,) perceived what a difference there was in her style of caressing me and my cousin.

I believe, indeed, it was not very long ere I began to have some idea that my father and my aunt were not, at the bottom of their hearts, quite so tender friends as they were generally supposed to be. It is impossible to say from what such a notion might have originally sprung. Some single look, perhaps, some one tone, some ineffectual smile, or husky whisper, may have been sufficient ; for I am satisfied that we at those years pick up a great many strange things from a species of instinct, of which we afterwards lose the use, and sometimes without replacing it by any thing half so good.

My father, however, had been a man of camps and

ships, and it is but fair to say, that I know him to have been considerably addicted to profane modes of expression, and by no means so strict as he should have been in his attendance at church. These were faults of which my aunt must at all times have had a profound abhorrence ; and perhaps the necessity she was, or might suppose herself to be under, of concealing some of her feelings as to these matters, had had the effect of exaggerating their natural bitterness.

The Captain, whatever his own faults were, did not at least interfere with his sister-in-law as to our early education. As soon as we were able to walk, little Kate and I were carried every Sunday to church, where we remained at my aunt's side until the service, which seldom occupied less than five hours on end, was over. The business of committing psalms and whole chapters of the Bible to memory divided the evening of that day with the Assembly's Catechism — a study by no means likely to engage the imagination of tender years. To cast a single glance upon any book not strictly devotional was looked upon as a most heinous offence ; we were not even permitted to take a turn in the garden. In a word, my father generally spent that day of the week abroad, and it was rendered, by every possible contrivance, a very miserable one to us at home.

When we were old enough, we were sent together every day to the parish school, where we were taught reading, writing, arithmetic, and I some Latin besides, in the same room with about a score of the country people's children of both sexes. Young Blackford, however, (so I was called,) and his cousin, were not without some marks of distinction at this seminary. We sat together on a long stool somewhat elevated above the others ; and the master had orders to send the lady notice if he should ever detect us in joining our ignobler fellows at their games. But this last regulation there was of course considerable difficulty in enforcing — not the less so, because the schoolmaster was sand-blind, and a cripple into the bargain. We always could hear the poor body's crutches

long before he could see us ; and I dare say he did not much lament this particular effect of his infirmity. He was, in truth, a good simple creature, who combined the most genuine benevolence and kindness towards all about him, with the ludicrous conceptions of his own importance, proper to his character and profession. His old mother lived at the other end of the cottage, and seldom a day passed without her leaving her wheel once or twice, that she might come into the school-room, and refresh her eyes with the contemplation of his glory. On such occasions the worthy soul cocked his night-cap, sat up more erect in his chair, and rolled out his vocables in a tone of more awful authority. The old woman seemed to be particularly fond of visiting us when we were at our Latin ; and I have seen the tears gush from her eye when her son thundered forth some sublime fragment of the *Propria quæ maribus*. He had, indeed, a fine voice, and was a capital precentor.

One day in the week was sacred to liberty and joy ; even at these years I am not sure that I do not still rise on Saturday with feelings different from those of any other morning ; so deep is the impression such early associations of happiness may bequeath. Those long, long summer days flew over our heads as if hours had been minutes. The hillside, where Katharine and I wandered, hand in hand, among the broom and the hawthorns—the clear stream, in which we were never weary of dabbling—the turfen houses that we built—the boats that we sailed—the old spaniel that was every where with us—the ponies which we rode barebacked—the little gardens that were our own gardens, and which my father used to give us the assistance of his one arm in cultivating—all these objects are as vividly before me now as if they were but things of yesterday. I believe I might safely say much more so.

And yet my Saturdays were not all happy.

I was about ten years old when a calamity, which I had scarcely sense enough to comprehend the misery of, befell me. My father had been complaining for some

weeks of headaches and languor, and had not been much out of doors. A delightful evening tempted him, and he came into the garden to enjoy the sunset from his favourite bower. My aunt had her work in her lap — Katharine was on his knee, and I was sitting at his foot reading *Blind Harry* aloud to them all, when suddenly, in a single moment, my father groaned aloud, and fell back in his chair speechless. His face was blackening. My aunt screamed to me immediately to run for the doctor — and the village being within sight, I never stopt till I was at his door. He ran faster than I had done, and by the time I reached our gate again I heard voices weeping. All was over. I sprung up stairs, and entered the room. He was lying half undressed upon his bed. There were a few beads of blood on his temple, where they had been trying to cup him — but never shall I forget the change that was on the face. My father had been a very full-blooded man, the cheeks, and, indeed, the whole countenance almost, of a dark red colour, the general expression fiery and vehement. But now, marble could not have been paler, nor any features carved in marble more serene. In truth, I should never have known it to be the same face — every line was softened, every passion asleep. I feel now, in thinking of it, somewhat of the same awe that checked my tears from flowing at the moment. I stared on the dead body with helpless terror, as if it had been some fearfully placid thing seen in a dream. I remember sobbing myself asleep that night, and when I awoke in the morning, my aunt was sitting by my bedside, with little Katharine weeping and lamenting on her knee.

My father had been much respected, and all the gentry of the country, along with our own tenants and neighbours, came to his funeral. God forgive me! — but in the midst of all my sorrow for my father, I was not without some feelings of pride and consequence, (little wretch that I was,) when I saw the respect that every one treated me with. Some of the foolish servants had taken strange ways to comfort me, and some of their

vile stuff had stuck by me, even while I thought I abhorred it.

I was soon punished. After we came back from the church, they examined my father's repositories, in case there should be any will — and I have understood since, that almost every body was astonished when they discovered one. You may suppose what they thought of it, when it was found that my father had settled the estate free and entire upon Katharine — burdened, however, with the original jointure to her mother — just, in short, as if there had never been either a rebellion or a forfeiture; — and that his own original patrimony, as a younger brother of Blackford, was all that remained for his own son.

I was told of this the same evening by an old friend of my father's, the then Grahame of Bogtoun. He saw that I was able to understand him, and he explained the whole matter to me; and I must now do myself the justice to say, that when it was explained, I was completely satisfied. "Your father," said this ancient gentleman, "has indeed acted like a gentleman, a soldier, and a brother; and in the upshot, my lad, it will be all as well for you." I went to my own room, however, and to bed, immediately after he had done speaking with me.

About the middle of the next day I was sitting by myself at the side of the river, when I found a soft little hand put suddenly into mine. It was Katharine. "My dear Matthew," said the child, "do you know they say it's not that you're to be the Laird, but that I'm to be the Lady. But how can that be, when you know it was always said about the house that we were to be married when we turned man and woman? Are you not going to be my goodman now, Matthew? I'm sure it would anger my uncle (she whispered the words, poor little thing,) if he heard you say that."

But enough of children and their talk. We were both sent to school again next day, and were catching butterflies together on our way home.

CHAPTER III.

A FEW years after my father's death the old minister of our parish died, and a preacher, who had been tutor in the patron's family, came to us in his place. The new minister was a strong, athletic, handsome, dark man, of perhaps five-and-thirty, with an aspect very severe, stern, and knotty in the pulpit, but out of it, as we soon had occasion to see, capable of being considerably softened. When he spoke with his full voice the effect was harsh ; but he had a whispering under-tone that was rather mild and engaging ; and, when he smiled, a set of fine large white teeth shewed to much advantage beside his close-shaven black beard. There was something of the commanding in the air and manner of this divine, and a great deal of the coarse.

He soon became a great favourite with my aunt. She was charmed with his sermons first, and afterwards with his company ; and it was proposed, that he should come over to Blackford three times a-week to give me my lessons, as I was now getting rather too old for the village school. He agreed to this, and Katharine became his pupil also.

He was a good scholar ; and, whatever his natural temper might be, he managed it so that we liked him very well as our preceptor. During the winter, he slept much oftener at our house than at the manse, and, in short, was almost a part of the family. My aunt's black bombazeen made way for a gray gown about this time ; and, ere that was quite worn out, she chose to change her name also, and became Mrs Mather.

This event, strange but true, produced at the time no unpleasant feelings in my mind, nor I believe in my cousin's. The fact of the matter is, that Mr Mather had made himself highly agreeable to us both. He gave us our lessons in a pleasant manner ; and often, when we

had committed any little offence, he had interfered with my aunt in our behalf. Besides, we had never heard him spoken of except with the utmost reverence of respect and admiration by those about us, and would not have dared to think it possible that that should be a wrong thing in which he was concerned.

Moreover, we got each of us a new suit of clothes, and several little presents, upon the occasion.

My aunt (for I shall still call her so) was now much more occupied than she had used to be; one consequence of which was, that we enjoyed greater freedom for our juvenile diversions. When at home, she was fonder of sitting with her husband than of watching us; and they frequently visited abroad, she travelling on a pillion behind him, as was then the fashion. Within no long space she had twins; and then the care of the children became a constant employment to her.

The Minister, meantime, had made a great step in life, and it was not long ere, among other symptoms of importance, he began to give me my lessons in a style much different from that which had at first conciliated my affections; I felt that he was no longer the same person, and my temper was not naturally of the most submissive order. But lessons, where the Teacher *is* really the Master, seldom occupy a great deal of time; and, the appointed penance over, for the rest of the day Kate and I were left very much to ourselves. We used often to ride many miles away from Blackford, and spend hours and hours together among the hills, where every green sequestered glen, and beautiful pastoral streamlet, became familiar to us. We would take some bread and cheese with us, and, setting our ponies loose to graze among the fern, remain half a summer's day sporting as we pleased behind some remote waterfall. If we stayed out too late, we were sure to be scolded when we returned; but I must confess this circumstance was often forgotten by both of us.

One day, we had laid our bridles on our ponies' necks in the old way, and were as usual amusing ourselves at

some little distance from the place where they were feeding, when a number of gentlemen happened to come up the glen a hare-hunting, and we, without thinking of our ponies, stood looking at them till they were gone down the hill again. Half an hour might have passed ere we took any thought about the ponies, and then we were not a little disconcerted to find them gone. We sought them for a long time among the winding glens, and all up many different streams ; but at last met with a shepherd lad, who told us, he had seen them both driving away at full speed westwards, and had in vain endeavoured to catch them. We now perceived that the noise of the dogs and the whistles had frightened them ; and, as the country was quite open, reflected, with some concern, that they would get to Blackford long before us without interruption ; for as to their running any where else, the little creatures were so completely members of the family, that that notion never even entered our heads.

We were full five miles from home, and the sun was already in the west. We ran and walked time about as fast as we were able, but it was quite dark long before we got home ; and, when we reached the avenue, we found one of the hinds with a lantern in his hand returning from looking for us. I shall never forget the stern looks we were met with when we entered the parlour. The Minister was sitting by the fire-side, my aunt opposite to him with one of the children on her lap, and I saw that her eyes were red, as if she had been crying.

“ So, young gentleman,” said Mr Mather, sitting bolt upright, and grasping an arm of his elbow-chair firmly in each hand — “ So, sir, this is the way in which you abuse our indulgence. How often has this behaviour been overlooked ? Sir, you shall find, that my wife and family are not always to be treated in this fashion with impunity.”

“ Oh, my dear,” said the lady, “ be calm. Consider a little ere you do any thing.”

"Calm!" quoth he, "yes, indeed, my love, I shall be calm enough. Well, I will let the night be over ere I do any thing."

"Do!" said I; (his voice and look had maddened me;) "what do you talk of? I'm sorry we're so late; but what is all this *doing* for?"

"Do you brave me, sirrah?" said he, and his eyes flashed.

I made him no answer.

"To your room, sir! — to your room!" cried he, and stamped violently on the floor.

I did not stay to be bidden twice, but made directly for the door.

"And you, miss," I heard him continue, "I must say, this is pretty behaviour in a young lady. What has torn your frock? Upon my word, Mrs Mather, the girl is getting a great deal too old for this sort of thing. She will be a woman ere long. Come hither, Katharine, and tell me what you have been doing with yourselves."

The room was a long one, and I had time to hear so much ere I gained the end of it. I looked round from the door, and saw Katharine sobbing, with her hands on her face, before them. Her long jet black hair was hanging in silken ringlets, sorely entangled, over her shoulders. I saw that some thorn had wounded her beautiful white arm in our flight, for it was bleeding. A new feeling of wrath sprung up at that moment within my bosom; but I was forced to gulp it all down, and bury myself in my bed-clothes as soon as I could.

I remembered, after I had been some time in bed, that I had not said my prayers, and got up, and knelt on the floor; but some improper thoughts crowded into my mind the moment I was in that posture, and I flung myself into my bed again without being able to do what I had intended.

CHAPTER IV.

I WAS roused out of my sleep at peep of day by a shake at my collar, and saw Mr Mather ; who, in a voice of the utmost composure, desired me to get up immediately. He took me by the hand, and, without letting me put on any thing but my shoes, led me down stairs, and so out to the orchard behind the house. He did not say a word to me until we were in the midst of the trees. He then took a handkerchief out of one pocket, and a small riding whip out of the other, and, seizing my two hands in one of his, began to cast a knot over them with his handkerchief.

My aunt had often corrected me in former days, but not recently, and Mr Mather had never before offered to strike me even with his hand ; so that my surprise at this behaviour was as great as my indignation. I said to him, almost choking, " Unhand me, sir ! What do you mean ? Who are you, that you should treat me thus ? "

He made no answer, but bound my arms above my head to a bough of a tree, and flung my shirt over my face. I resisted with all my might, but I was now blinded, and I only once hit him, and that not until I had kicked both my shoes off. He drew his whip lightly once or twice over my back, and then laid on three several deliberate stripes, that cut the skin clean through, from the nape of the neck downwards. I screamed out at the first blow, but stood shivering in mute rage under the two last.

" This will teach you to brave me again," he whispered in my ear ; and I heard his footsteps retreating.

A minute after, the footman came out of the house and unbound me. I was shaking all over, and the lad half led, half carried me, to my room, where he made me swallow a glass of water, and put me to bed again.

He sat by me until my back had stopped bleeding, and then dressed it for me with a little linen and lard, in vain endeavouring all the while to get me into any talk whatever. Seeing that I was preparing to dress myself he now left me ; upon which I put on my clothes, stole down stairs as gently as I could, caught my pony, and saddled him, and so off to the hill as hard as my heels could make him gallop.

I had been several hours on the hill ere I thought of any thing but my rage — but I now began to feel very hungry, and thought I might as well go down to a village which I saw below me, and get some breakfast from an acquaintance whose house was there. Accordingly down I came ; but just as I was turning the corner into the village, whom should I meet but Mr Mather. I was close at his side ere I saw him. He was in his whiskey, (our great man had brought one from Edinburgh with him after the last General Assembly,) driving a very tall and bony white horse, which had once been my father's favourite. He stopped the moment he saw me, and called out, "Here, sir ! I desire you will go home, and *instantly*. Do not imagine that these monkey tricks are to go on any farther — Home, sir, I say, home !" I reined up my pony, and answered him, grinding my teeth as I spoke, that I would follow my own fancy, not his ; and that I did not know what he talked of as my *home*. The proud priest made a cut at me with his whip, and though I sprung my pony to one side as quickly as possible, the end of the lash hit me sharply across the face, just below the eyes.

I had a gully knife in my pocket, and I instantly, unclasping it, made my pony leap past him, and seized the rein at his horse's head. He saw my design, and lashed at me furiously, but I took it all, and divided the leather close by the bit. I then gave the old horse a bitter cut or two under the belly with my switch, and reinforcing this with the utmost power of my voice, saw him fly, as if seven devils were within him, right through the

I galloped my pony after him, and enjoyed his shouts of alarm, until he was past the houses. A moment after his wheel took a huge lump of coal that was lying on the road, and I saw him projected into the heart of a quick-set hedge, from which he rebounded into the ditch. I saw that he lay quite motionless, and hearing people behind me, leaped the hedge myself, and regained the hill.

I got into the wildest part of the moor ere I stopped, and then sat down on a stone to consider with myself what was to be done. I had revolved many different plans, of going to Glasgow, to Edinburgh, and I know not what, when suddenly the thought struck me that it was very likely the Minister was dead, and if so, that I was certainly a murderer. Upon the first flash of this I got to my pony again, and rode farther into the heath, convincing myself more and more, as I went on, that the thing must be so. I had tasted nothing since yesterday's noon, and my throat and lips were dry with exhaustion and agitation. It was a dark October day — how different from yesterday was the lowering sky! The wind began to howl over the heath, and every thing looked gloomy, far and near. I thought of my aunt and the children, and cursed myself for what I had done. I thought I should have no peace any where, and that the only thing I could do was to surrender myself, and take whatever might come.

I was riding slowly homeward with this intention, when two men, farm servants of our own, came up with me, and made me their prisoner, without resistance. They told me the Minister was not dead, but sadly hurt — and something of my burden was taken off; but they would say little more, and seemed to regard me with a sort of horror as they walked by me, one on each side of the pony. Seeing this, I did not much trouble them with questions, but sat doggedly in my saddle, suffering them to take the whole management of the animal. On reaching Blackford — it was now twilight — I was led at once into the presence of my aunt, who received me,

to my infinite astonishment, with very much her usual manner, somewhat more seriously, perhaps, but not a whit more sternly. She signed to me to sit down, and I obeyed her. "Matthew," said she, "you expect severity here, but you will find yourself quite mistaken. You have not done a boy's trick to-day, and are not to be treated as if you had. Consider with yourself, and I hope God will touch your heart, and enable you to be thankful that my bairns are not fatherless. You have been starving on the hill all day — eat your supper, Matthew, and go to your bed, and we will see what is to be said to-morrow."

With this she went out of the room, leaving me alone. I eat a crust of dry bread, drank some milk, and got into my bed immediately. The lad who had dressed my back for me came in some time after, and looked at it again. He satisfied me that there was no danger in the minister's case; he had been stunned and bruised, but they had bled him directly, and he was now asleep, without symptoms of fever. Notwithstanding all this, however, you may suppose I had no very easy night. It was no ordinary day that had passed, and I lay under the oppression of indistinct expectations.

CHAPTER V.

THE next day and the next again passed as if nothing had happened, except that Mr Mather kept his room, and both his wife and Katharine were almost always up stairs. With the latter, indeed, I had no opportunity of holding any private conversation; but the constraint and unhappiness of her looks were sufficiently marked by me, and I believe by all the house besides. On the third morning, a note was put into my hands as I was getting up. It was in my aunt's hand-writing, and consisted of a single sentence, which I believe I can give you *verbatim*: — "It is Mr Mather's desire, that, when he appears

to-day, nothing whatever may be said in allusion to late events, nor ever henceforth. Observe this for the sake of us all. M. M."

I determined to adhere to this rule most rigidly; and on entering the breakfast parlour, saluted Mr Mather, who was already seated at the table, as nearly as was possible in the same manner I should have done a week before. He also dissembled, though not—any more than myself, it is probable—with perfect success. He smiled, and said his "good morning" in much his usual note; and once or twice during breakfast asked for bread, salt, &c. from me, with an air of great indifference. But how deadly pale was his cheek! and once or twice when my glance was drawn towards him suddenly and furtively, I saw the fire that was glowing deep down in his fixed eyeballs, and marked the quivering malice that struggled with a faint smile upon his lips. The blood he had lost had evidently had a considerable effect on his nerves as well as his complexion; for I have seen him play his part in situations of this kind in much superior style.

The Minister said prayers after breakfast, according to custom, and withdrew immediately to his own room, without saying a word about *lessons*—in fact, I heard no more about any thing of the sort for several weeks. Katharine, however, told me that hers were going on in the old way. She whispered this to me one day when I met her on the staircase with her book in her hand. Poor Katharine! her eyes were often red. She did not come out and play or walk with me any more; but I saw well enough what was at the bottom of all this. My aunt was always civil.

But I am talking nonsense, John. Why should I attempt to make you comprehend things that necessarily require a sense of their own—a sense of which, I am sure, you are fortunate enough to be entirely destitute?—I might as well expect the bird on the tree to be up to all the little minute miseries of one in a cage, as you to understand any thing worth the mentioning of what it

is to be *the* boy in an unkind house. I am not thinking of the drumstick that was my share of the barn-door fowl, nor of the outside slices of the rounds of beef, nor of the *no* fat, nor even of the scanty plateful — though even to these contemptibles I was no stranger ; but what think ye of the sudden change — a change made once and for ever though — from Matthew (sometimes Mat) to *Mister* Matthew, or perhaps, for variety's sake, *Mister* Wald? It was this mixture of boy's treatment and man's treatment that did the most to madden me — this solemn civility of insult, mixt up with the most odious petty meannesses. I had heard, I know not from whom, when Mather first came to the parish, that his father was a barber. Conceive how often this recurred to me now — conceive how I grinded my teeth, as I lay counting hour after hour through the night, upon the sweet idea that I was trodden under foot by the spawn of a village shaver — that he had whipped me — that I had borne the marks of him upon my back ! Conceive the intense perceptions I now had of his ineradicable baseness — conceive the living disgust that crept through me whenever he coughed or sneezed — above all, when he laughed. His slow, deliberate, loud, brazen, Ha ! — ha ! — ha ! — what a sound that was ! His fine large white teeth seemed to me as if they belonged to some overgrown unclean beast — some great monstrous rat. Every, the very least motion, spoke whole volumes of filth. What exquisite vulgarity did I not see in his broad flat nails, bitten to the quick ! I thought I could have told what he was merely by the coarseness of his skin ! And all this time, a distant, serene, hauteur of politeness, forsooth ! “ *Mister* Matthew's plate. Perhaps Mr Wald would like a little of so and so. My dear, would you see what Mr Wald is doing.” I can never make you comprehend the five-millionth part of what I suffered during this period. There was a sort of half-choking feeling about my throat that I shall never describe. Anger, rage, contempt, scorn, hatred, — you may have known all these ; but I can scarcely give you the credit of having

loathed! That is my word — that was my feeling. I was *under* this man. That is the point. I used to dream of seeing him planted chin-deep in mud — pelted with filth and vermin! I know not what abominations passed through my mind. Yes, I once laughed myself awake at seeing him spinning round under a gibbet, — gown, bands, and all!

Even their children were no longer the same to me. I had used to be extremely fond of one of them — the little boy. He was often brought into my room, before I was up in the morning, to play with me in my bed, and hear my horrible attempts upon the fiddle, for I was just beginning it then. This little fellow now pouted whenever I spoke to him; and once, when he was brought into the room where we were all sitting together after dinner, I saw him eye me for a moment, and then shrink into his mother's bosom, and heard him mumble something in her ear about putting away "Bad Mat." You may suppose that I gave up my pet upon this.

The lessons were resumed after a time; but they were now given with almost as much indifference as they were received with. I only wonder, when I think of the whole scene, that it should have lasted for better than a year. Within doors I had absolutely no comfort, none: without, I had no companion but my cousin: and I did not now dare to be so happy as I had used to be even when I was alone with her. Bad feelings and passions were gradually eating into my very soul.

One day, about this time, I received a note inviting me to dine at Carbrax, the house of an old crony of my father's, a Major Vans. Carbrax had had, of late years, comparatively little intercourse with Blackford; but that was no business of mine. So I carried the billet in my hand, and, presenting it to Mr Mather, asked him as respectfully as I could, whether I might accept the invitation. He, happening to be in a good humour for once, read the note, and said he was surprised I should have thought it necessary to put such a question. "Cer-

tainly, — by all means. What reason could there possibly be for my refusing?"

The place is some six miles farther down the river, so I went on horseback; and, as I expected some coursing or fishing, I went early in the day. The Major, however, did not come home till dinner-time; and then, not a little to my surprise, I found that he had a large party, all gentlemen, or men at least, (for he was an old bachelor,) and myself the only young person in the room.

What a difference between this congress of bon-vivants, and the staid domestic parson's-grey circle at Blackford! The old Major was a notorious humorist; and I suppose every body thought an invitation to his house was a signal that Momus and Bacchus were come down to be the lords of earth for the night. His own most extraordinary face — how bright is it before me at this moment! That long trumpet-nose, blown up with every possible modification of alcohol, — the old leering, winking, cunning eyes, — the enormous watery lips, — and the highly powdered toupee! — The whole of the party seemed to be trying to do their best; but with him there was no effort. He sat easy, unconstrained, inimitable, — the incarnation of drollery.

A sheep's-head at the head of the table, a mountain of salted beef at the bottom, and a huge dish of boiled carrots in the middle, formed the dinner. But there was considerable variety of liquors; champagne flying about like small beer, — hock, in black bottles of the most extraordinary shapes, — and claret in great pewter jugs, which an old, squinting, gouty butler replenished every now and then from a barrel that stood upon a couple of chairs in the corner of the room.

I was tipsy immediately; but I remember enough of my folly to make me blush at this moment when I think of myself. The half-crazy old good-for-nothing had heard of the story of the whiskey, and nothing would serve him but that I should tell it in my own way to the company.

The fool, his brain boiling with champaigne, did this *absque mora* ; and then what laughter, what cheering, what huzzaing ! — I have a very indistinct recollection of what followed ; but I think it is very likely, that there had not been a single wild dream in my head for many months back that these hoary reprobates did not suck out of me. I was soon totally drunk ; and, when I awoke next morning, was by no means in a hurry to perceive that I was not in my own bed.

When I did so, however, I got up immediately, and rode home before breakfast. Guess my feelings, when, coming into the parlour, I saw a stranger sitting with the family, and recognized one of the Major's jolly companions of the preceding night. My heart smote me that moment. I never for a moment doubted, but that he had made a full report of all the folly which had been revealing itself to my own remembrance bit by bit as I rode on, and the wind cleared my head of its fumes. You may suppose, that I was at any rate not very likely to make a good hand at the breakfast-table that morning. I ate nothing, drank whatever was within my reach, and rushed out immediately afterwards to bathe in the river.

I was sent for, in the course of the afternoon, to speak with Mr Mather in his study, where I had not recently been a visiter. He was smoking when I went in ; and, taking his pipe from his mouth, told me in three words, and with an air of the most perfect calmness, that he had written some time ago to a friend of his at St Andrews, that he had received an answer that morning, and that it was his and Mrs Mather's wish, that I should set off next morning for that university. I asked no questions, and signified my assent in as few words as I could make use of. He then resumed his pipe, and I retired in a considerable flurry, as you may imagine.

When I came to my own room, I found my aunt there busy arranging my linen, along with one of the maids. I staid beside them, and packed up my little wardrobe in silence. Some time after they were gone, Katharine tapped at my door, and came in with a face

full of woe, the marks of tears visible all down her cheeks, and scarcely able to speak three syllables without a sob. She put a little red psalm-book into my hand, and said I must keep it for her sake, and always think of old days when I was in church with it. I kissed Kate, both our eyes swimming; and she ran hastily out of my room, for she heard some footstep on the stair-case. Katharine was always sent early to bed, and did not appear again that night, so this little minute was all our parting.

I dare say, Mather and his wife had in reality planned this journey some time before; but I have as little doubt that it was hastened in consequence of what had been reported of my folly at Carbrax. They were of course annoyed with the notion of being the sport of the country; and the person who carried the story to them, a little electioneering pettifogger, as I afterwards discovered, was not likely to have softened the matter in his narrative.

I met old Vans many years afterwards in Edinburgh, and found that my juvenile adventure with the Minister's whiskey had had the honour to become one of his standing stories. He coupled it generally with a grand achievement of his own, which, it seems, finished the jovial evening, of which I had been fortunate enough to witness the commencement.

The party I had seen assembled that day at his table consisted, it appears, chiefly of the ruling senators of a neighbouring royal burgh, which was destined to be, on the morning afterwards, the scene of a contested election. The Major, after he had made his guests tolerably merry, (I had been put to bed long ere this,) proposed to shew them a fine coal-pit in the immediate vicinity of his mansion. The worthy deacons and bailies were up to any thing, and the frolic took. As soon, however, as the whole party had descended, the bucket was once more elevated from above, and the Major, as they contemplated it dangling upwards, told them, with a most benignant smile, that he had not brought them into the

bowels of the earth for nothing. In short, they found, upon advancing into a more airy part of the excavation, a table and chairs set out in regular order, candles stuck against the coal wall, and the Major's hogshead of claret cunningly removed from his dining-room in the upper regions for their entertainment. Rebellion was evidently hopeless; so, after a deal of vain lamentation and abuse, the trusty magistrates made the best of a bad bargain, and sat contentedly until their host was pleased to release them, — which, it is unnecessary to add, was not until the hour of election was long over, and the Major's ally chaired in all form and glory.

The bailies must have been sensible in the end that the Major had done them no very serious injury with all this manœuvring. They had already pocketed, no doubt, the fees of the one candidate, and they now were obliged to the rival interest for a hearty soaking; nay, the malicious world even whispered, that they had discovered a vein of something very pretty in the region of the black diamonds.

CHAPTER VI.

THERE was only one circumstance to alloy in any degree the pleasure with which I bade adieu for the first time to the roof of my fathers. But I have no wish to be sentimental, so let me remove myself at once to the most ancient seat of the Northern Muses.

I travelled the first stage in the patched up whiskey, (for it had been sorely shattered,) under the guidance of the ploughman; and then, bidding adieu to him at the county town, pursued the journey, riding post.

I sought out immediately on my arrival the learned Professor to whom my letters were addressed, and found a room already prepared for me in his house, which was situated within the walls of one of the Colleges. My new guardian was a dull, solemn, perfectly good-natured

orientalist, who, after he had seen me gowned, matriculated, and introduced to the classes I was to attend, seemed to think that he had done all that was necessary. His housekeeper was a maiden sister, turned of thirty, extremely different from him in every thing, lively, affable, a great manager, knowing in the cookery book, and the best maker of a little noggin of hot punch I have ever met with to this hour.

Two young students, besides myself, were boarded in the house ; and certainly we had no reason to complain of our fare. Except at meal-times, we were our own masters ; nobody gave us the least trouble : And I must say, that, in our turn, we were good boys, and gave them, on the whole, as little annoyance, or disturbance of any kind, as could reasonably have been expected. Miss Patterson often praised us all for our behaviour ; but I was her favourite. She had been very pretty, and was still very good-looking, though rather too fat, and rubicund. She liked to have a young gentleman to attend her when she walked out on the streets ; and though the plainest of the three, I was selected for this more frequently than any of the others. Sometimes we even extended our promenades into the country. — In short, we became prodigious friends. She was fond of sentiment and poetry ; I flattered her on her taste ; and, in return, she flattered me on my parts, ay, and, ludicrous as the notion may appear to you, even on my person. This last amused even myself at first ; but, though I smiled at her in my sleeve, I am ashamed to say that her compliments nevertheless took effect. I am quite conscious that her words first blew into life that spark of coxcomby, which I suppose few bosoms of that age do not either shew or conceal. She chose my waistcoats for me ; made me have my hair dressed according to the fashion ; carried me with her to the principal tea parties of the place ; and openly, upon every occasion, called the little cross-made hero her dear beau.

By help of so much oil my rustic awkwardnesses were gradually rubbing themselves off ; and, taking courage to

flirt one evening with a pretty girl of more tender age, the monkey asked me, with a face of brass, if it was true that I was to be married to Miss Biddy ; adding, with a compassionate sigh, that she hoped the report was true, for every body might see how much we were in love with each other.

The sarcasm did not escape my observation, and I made no reply, except by a laugh ; but, for all this, what she had said was far from being forgotten as soon as I had heard it. On the contrary, my boyish vanity began to expand itself, forsooth, into a world of most fantastic ideas ; and I had the vice to think, that, however misplaced the lady's fancy might be in respect of years, still she had so far shewn judgment in the midst of her absurdity. Every little kindness I had received, however innocent, however amiable, was now recalled to serve as the pin for some most egregious commentary of self-complacency. I remarked, as we went home that very night, how heavily she leant upon my arm — set down every short-drawn breath (that is to say, every other one she drew, for, as I have mentioned, she was a fat little beauty) for a soul-heaved sigh of passion ; and, in short, dreamt of nothing all night, but Cleopatras and Didos. The best of the whole joke was, that I persuaded myself to regard the matter quite in a serious point of view : in the very acme and ecstasy of self-love, I flattered myself that pity was by much the ruling feeling within me ; and completed my folly by the exquisite affectation of making a solemn resolution to look cold and distantly henceforth upon my inamorata, if perchance that benign cruelty might serve to eradicate by degrees the pardonable passion which my perfections had unconsciously planted in this too susceptible bosom. Was ever such a puppy !

I was in the midst of these fine airs, and I really know not how much farther I might have carried the absurdity, when I was seized with a scarlet fever, which, though I believe I never was thought to be absolutely in danger, confined me for three weeks to my bed, and left me as weak as a shadow. During the whole of my

illness, Miss Patterson attended upon me as if I had been a brother or a son ; and I confess, that, as I was recovering, I could not see her creeping about the room, and mixing her jellies and cordials, without my heart smiting me for having been capable of thinking a disrespectful thought of one who looked so like a mother to me : But I was destined to be still farther rebuked.

I was sitting up one night, supported with pillows, when Miss Patterson came in with some tea, and sat down on the opposite side of the fire while I was sipping it. She looked kindly at me for some minutes, without saying any thing, and then began to *hem* with some little awkwardness of manner, as if there was something at the end of her tongue which she yet found some difficulty in uttering. I believe, as I observed her confusion, some of my old fancies were near germinating again ; but at last she began. "I hope you will soon be on your legs now again, Mr Matthew," said she ; "and do you know, I have a very particular reason for wishing this ; for — but don't laugh when I tell you — do you know I am going — to — to — to change — my — my condition."

I was struck dumb ; but she was blushing and looking down, and did not notice it, until I gathered myself up, and made shift to say, I was happy, very happy to hear of it, and to ask if I might not be favoured with the name of the fortunate gentleman.

"You never saw him," said she ; "but he is now here, and you will see him as soon as you can come down stairs ; and remember, I depend upon your liking him. You know you were always my chief favourite among all the boarders ; and do you know, I have taken a strange fancy into my head — Will you be the best man, my dear Mr Wald ?"

"With all my heart," said I, "my dear Miss Patterson ; but you forget, you have not told me the name yet."

"Mackay," she answered — "John Mackay — a very old friend, I assure you ; and he has just got the Kirk of St Dees from the College."

"And I never saw Mr Mackay ?"

“No, my dear, he has been away good ten years teaching a school in the north : and, to tell you the truth, I had almost begun to think the world was to be against us, and the thing never to be. It is many a day since John and I were first acquainted. But now we shall do very well ; for St Dees is a comfortable little place ; and I have laid by no less than thirty pounds, which will be a great help to the manse. I have not bought a new gown these five years but one, and that was mournings for my brother, the lieutenant, — poor Bob ! — that died, as you may have heard, perhaps, at Ticonderoga.”

My spirits were not at the time in a very buoyant state ; but, at any rate, I believe I may do myself the justice to say, that I could not have heard all this without feelings of considerable compunction and humiliation. I smothered all up, however, as well as I was able, and consoled myself with good resolutions as to the modesty of my future carriage and imagination.

In a few days I was able to join the family circle, and saw, of course, the happy man. Happy, indeed, I may well say he was ; for, in spite of a set of features cast in a most massive and saturnine mould, a dry adust complexion, and a figure of Herculean ponderosity, I believe I never met with such a specimen of glee irrepressible. The good man, evidently not much short of fifty, rose every now and then from his chair, and walked up and down the room, rubbing his hands and smiling to himself. Occasionally, *apropos de rien*, we were treated with a most sonorous cackle — and the triumphant simper that sat on his lips whenever he addressed or looked to Miss Biddy — the dance in his eyes whenever she happened to smile upon him in return ; — all these, and a thousand little symptoms besides, are quite beyond my power of painting.

I was present at the wedding, and had the honour of ungloving the horny hand of this worthy man at the critical moment which sealed his bliss. The fashion of marriage-jaunts, and all such refinements, were not yet come into play among us ; so we had a capital hot sup-

per at the Professor's, and they in whose honour the entertainment was given, were neither denied the opportunity of partaking in it, nor compelled to partake of it longer than was consistent with the proprieties of the occasion.

These nuptials were celebrated within a few weeks of the end of the session, and, as yet, I was entirely in the dark as to what was to become of me during the months of the long vacation ; for, although I heard every now and then from Mrs Mather, and sometimes had a few more acceptable lines from little Katharine, not a word had ever yet been dropped as to this matter. In short, the College was within a week of its breaking up ere I was informed by the Professor, that he had heard from Mr Mather, and that it was arranged I should stay all the summer where I was. The other lads went away home ; and I was thus left quite alone in the house. And a dull, a very dull house it was ; for old Patterson was degenerating rapidly, his excellent housekeeper removed from him, into a sloven ; and every thing about his establishment partook, of course, of the effects of his indolence and inattention to common affairs. However, I in so far profited by all this. I had spent but an idle winter ; and, having now no companions to dissipate with, I set seriously to my books, and made considerable progress in my studies.

The next winter found me in possession of habits of greater diligence ; and I did not, to any very culpable extent, depart from them. I was, on the whole, a hard reader, and, at the end of my second course, received marks of decided approbation from the teachers under whom I had been placed.

I had lived a life almost solitary, and in general certainly very simple and innocent. The lads there were mostly poor, and had few means of signaling themselves by any folly. Our greatest diversion in the way of sport was a game at golf ; and we had little notion of any debauch beyond a pan of toasted cheese, and a bottle or two of the College ale, now and then on a Saturday night.

I, to be sure, had at my first *entrée* been admitted to some of the parties among the town's people ; but, after the departure of my dear patroness, my acquaintance with that sphere of gaiety, such as it was, soon dwindled away to nothing.

I began to feel a strong — a strengthening — an impatient desire to revisit Blackford ; but, hearing nothing from thence that looked as if my presence was expected, had set it down as fixed, that I was to pass another solitary summer at the University.

But let me hurry over all this. At the end of the third season, I found myself in precisely the same situation, which I have been describing as mine towards the end of the second : with this exception, however, that I now began, not merely to fancy, but to feel myself something of a man, and, of course, to contemplate, with great and increasing bile, the state of uncertainty to which my concerns, and prospects of every sort, had every appearance of being abandoned, whether from contemptuous indifference, or from total aversion. A thousand suspicions of dark, settled, deliberate malevolence, began to overcloud my thoughts. Even Katharine — even she, I said to myself, was becoming a stranger to me. How long was this to last ? What was to be the end of it ? — Why not go at once, however uninvited and unexpected — why not go at once, and get categorical answers to questions, which, in my boyhood, I could scarcely have been expected to think of putting — to what authority, namely, was my duty really bound ; and of what patrimony should I look on myself as ultimately master ? Upon these things, it was sufficiently evident, the shaping of my future education, the whole complexion of my fortunes and hopes, ought to depend.

It may be, after all, possible that I deceived myself, when I supposed that these things formed the real objects of my heart-seated anxiety. Certain it is, that the anxiety itself existed : Some uncontrollable yearning drew me ; and, if I could not analyze, I at least obeyed it. I determined not to wait for the formalities of the

academical dispersion — I determined not to wait until the letter, which I had made up my mind to disobey, had come.

Having packed my trunk, and left a note on my table for Dr Patterson, I let myself out of the house one night after all the family were gone to bed, and had walked near thirty miles ere I thought there was any chance of my evasion being discovered.

CHAPTER VII.

I HAD great strength and activity, and by help of these, and an anxious mind to stimulate them, I got over the ground, so as to sleep the second night within sixteen miles of my journey's end. I over-slept myself, however, and it was near eight o'clock next morning ere I saw the smoke of Blackford over the firs. I was startled just at that moment with hearing a most sonorous voice, exerting itself apparently quite near me in some lofty declamation. I halted for an instant, and recognized my good old Dominie, who was coming towards me through the wood, engaged in his usual morning's walk, to his favourite tune of

“ *Pellaco quondam prognatæ vertice pinus.* ”

The worthy enthusiast was so deeply occupied with the book he contrived to hold in his hand, that he was close upon me ere he noticed that any one had crossed his walk ; and even then, the sun being in his dim eyes, I believe he would not have recognized his pupil, had I not saluted him with another fragment of the same strain —

“ *Teque ego sæpe meo, te carmine, compellabo !* ” —

On hearing which note, the play of his wooden supporters was arrested with such hasty energy, that the spectacles almost danced off his nose ; while strenuously shaking

me by the hand, he ejaculated in rapid succession, "Guide us a'! — Mr Matthew himself, as I shall answer! *Salve deum genus!* — Welcome, thrice welcome, *φιληντες πατριδα γαιαν.*"

The fervour of our first greetings having evaporated, I asked my friend after his own household, and inquired, whether all the family were at home at Blackford? The dominie, dropping a pious tear, informed me, that he had some time ago laid his mother in the grave, and that he was now a solitary being in the world. "As to Blackford," said he, dashing his sorrow aside, "I suppose you know that the Minister has been in the North for some time. He is not yet returned; but all the rest are at home, and well. I saw Miss Katharine riding past my window yesterday with Mr Lascelyne; — ay, here are his horses, and pretty cattle, indeed, are they; — the like were never seen in the parish until he came among us."

I knew very well that Mr Mather had been governor in the noble family of Lascelyne, and owed his living to that patronage; but, totally unprepared for hearing of such a visiter, I was so rash as to shew my surprise by a broad question, — "Who is this you are speaking of?"

The answer was satisfactory enough. The Honourable George Lascelyne had been domesticated in the house of his ancient preceptor for more than a year past.

Recollecting myself, or endeavouring to do so, I gave my friend to understand, that I had heard the circumstance before, and allowed it to slip out of my memory.

The knowledge, however, that Mr Mather was *not* at Blackford, was, although perhaps I was not conscious of this at the moment to its full extent, far more than sufficient to counterbalance any feelings of reluctance which could arise out of the prospect of meeting with a stranger, even an *honourable* stranger, there; so I parted company from the schoolmaster, and followed *passibus inæquis* the groom of this unknown. The horses were, indeed, beautiful thorough-breds; and their guide, although I had never seen a Newmarket sprig before, had

an air so decidedly knowing, that I was satisfied at one glance this must be *the thing*.

My aunt happened to be at her window, and, I believe, both saw and recognized me long ere I was very near the gate. She was there to receive me when I came up ; and, I must own, nothing surprised me so much as the little surprise she exhibited upon the occasion. I take it for granted, that, finding herself without appropriate instructions from her lord, she had at once formed the resolution, that he should find *res integras* upon his arrival. Had my name not been Matthew Wald, I should say, my reception by the lady of Blackford was better, than, under all the circumstances, I ought to have looked for. But, to tell truth, all the time she was speaking to me my thoughts were wandering.

Katharine had heard my voice in the lobby, and she ran out immediately. There was such a flush on her face, and such a sweet confused flash of joy in the first glance I met, that I saw nothing but my own old Kate, and felt all my soul kindle and melt at once as I embraced her. But the moment that was over — the moment my eyes *rested* upon my cousin, I perceived so great a change, that I could not help wondering that had not been the first thing I did see. After gazing at her three seconds, I durst no more have offered to kiss her again, as I had just done, than to fly. From thirteen to sixteen — from a child to a woman — what a leap was here ! — And such a creature, John ! — I was awed into very dumbness when I contemplated the glorious, the gorgeous flower, into which my dear, quiet, little bud had expanded — the elastic, bounding, loveliness of the formed figure ! — the rich luxury of those deep-set eyes — those lips, on which a thousand new meanings vibrated and hovered — the lofty modesty of mien that sat in the place of blushing bashfulness — the unconscious reserve of conscious beauty — the innocent instinctive majesty of young womanhood ! — To think of that moment almost brings boyhood again into my brain and my blood. — But I

know, I see your wicked smile, and I would fain take the hint if I could.

In the midst of all this romance, I heard somebody humming some outlandish tune in the parlour; and Mrs Mather said hastily, — “Come, Katharine, my love, we are forgetting Mr Lascelyne. — You will be ready for your breakfast, Matthew?”

I was the last that entered the room, and my aunt immediately honoured me with a formal introduction to a very fine gentleman, who, arrayed in a morning-gown of the most delicate chintz, and morocco slippers, was lounging listlessly over a cup of chocolate and an ethereal wafer of toast, and who acknowledged his new acquaintance with a smile and a bow, both redolent of the most condescending indifference. My spirits were rather in a flurry, but that occasional wandering of mind neither prevented my doing ample justice to my breakfast, nor remarking, with surprise at first, and afterwards with a very different sort of feeling, the complete ease of familiarity with which our honourable youth treated my cousin. While I had barely courage to say *Katharine*, behold *Kate* was the most respectful address his noble lips vouchsafed; and, what was worse, both the mother and the daughter seemed to be quite delighted with this free-and-easy system. His very way of picking his teeth, had all the quiet loftiness of presumption in it. There was the quintessence of the aristocratic in his hollow laugh. But the same proud security was visible in things that interested me far more than these. In a word, for why should I expatiate on my own humiliations, I could not help two rising suspicions from gnawing my heart within me. The first of them was, that the young lord despised me; and the second, that he loved my cousin.

Katharine happened to go out of the room soon after breakfast, and I slunk up stairs to my own old garret in a mood of considerable sulkiness. I flung myself down in a chair, and my eyes rested upon an old fashioned hanging mirror, which, by a great crack

through the middle, recalled to my recollection an unfortunate game at Blindman's Buff that took place several years before, when my beautiful cousin was a match for myself in every species of romping. From these old days my attention wandered back to the present, and I began to study, with some feelings not of the most delightful description, the appearance of the image now before me. The triumphs of the Fife friseur had been quite obliterated during my journey, and a huge mass of raven black hair was hanging about my ears in all the native shagginess of the picturesque. I perceived at one glance, that my whole dress was in the extreme of barbarous bad taste, — that my coat was clumsily cut, and would have taken in two of me, — that my waistcoat, (poor Miss Patterson's wedding-garment,) was an atrocity, — and that my linen was not only coarse but soiled. I had it in my power to remedy this last defect ; so I stripped off my clothes, and began to scrub myself by way of preparation. But, clean shirt and all, the thing would not do. "Fool!" said I to myself, "do you not see how it is? What nonsense for you to dream of figging yourself out ; as if any thing could make *that* look well ! Do you not see, that your complexion is as black as a gipsy's, — your growth stunted, — every thing about you as destitute of grace as if you were hewn out of a whinstone? What a pair of shoulders that bull's neck is buried in ! The sturdiness of these legs is mere deformity ! Shapeless, uncouth, awkward, savage-looking ragamuffin that you are, seeing your own reflection as you do, how could you dream that any thing in the form of a woman could ever fancy these grotesque proportions?"

I heard voices under my window at this moment, and, peeping out, saw Mr Lascelyne and my cousin standing together in conversation beside the dial-stone. He had laid aside his robe-de-chambre, and was dressed for riding. A short green frock, and tight buckskin breeches, descending, without a crease, to the middle of the leg, exhibited the perfect symmetry of his tall and graceful

person. His profile was purely Greek, — nothing could surpass the bright bloom of his complexion. But it was the easy, degagee air of the coxcomb — the faultless grace of every attitude and action, that cut me deepest. I saw it all. — Fain would I have not seen it ; — I tried to deceive myself ; — but I could not be blind. — I saw Katharine's eye beaming upon him as he chattered to her. I watched his airy glances — I devoured their smiles. He took her gaily by the hand, and they disappeared round the corner of the house.

I sat down again, half naked as I was, in my chair, and spurned the slipper from my foot against the mirror. It hit the line of the old crack ; and the spot where it lighted became the centre of a thousand straggling radii, that made it impossible I should be henceforth offended otherwise than with sorely broken fractions of my sweet form.

I went into the wood ; and, although I heard myself called on several times, did not think proper to be in any hurry to reappear. After an hour had passed I heard horses' feet near me, and, getting to the hedge, perceived Mr Lascelyne and my cousin riding together down the avenue.

"How strange," said Katharine, "this is of Matthew ! I can't understand my cousin to-day. I never doubted he would have rode out with us."

"Poo, poo !" replied the youth, "he has gone to visit some of his old acquaintance, I dare say. We shall see him at dinner. — 'Tis a charming day ! Shall we go to Bridgend, or up the glen ?"

I did not catch the answer ; but began half to reproach myself for my behaviour. I wandered, however, across some fields, and found the two ponies, that Kate and I had used to scamper about the hills upon in former days, grazing together in their old paddock, amidst the milch cows. Their coats were shaggy, their manes hung down about their feet, and they set off, neighing and kicking up their heels, whenever I came near them. I called to them, and my own old favourite knew my voice at once.

Katharine's little piebald came trotting after him, and they both began rubbing their noses upon me in rather a melancholy fashion. Dogs could scarcely have shewed more sense.

"Aha!" said I, looking at piebald's unshod hoofs, "'tis many a day that your services have been dispensed with, my woman. You see what it is to be an old friend, Mistress Bess of Kintail. Poor, dwarfish, rough-coated Highlander that you are, do you not perceive that your tail has never been docked, nor even your mane hogg'd? and for you to think of keeping your own against yon fine, tall, sleek, slimb ambler, that shews the blood of Araby the Blest in every fibre, and no more considers you as one of the same race with herself, than my lady's pet greyhound, in her stuffed basket, does the poor colley, that she hears barking on the hill! — Was ever such nonsense?"

I walked away from the pair on this; but the poor devils were so affectionately disposed, that they kept at my heels till I was out of the field, and I saw them stretching their old white noses over the stile after me as long as I was within sight of them.

I walked about the fields till I had pretty well cooled myself, and approached the house when I thought it was near dinner-time, with many resolutions, that, whatever I might feel, I should at least betray nothing to make me ridiculous. I was thrown off myself again, however, by perceiving, as I passed the offices, my old friend the whiskey, evidently fresh from a journey. I concluded, of course, that Mr Mather had returned: nor was I deceived in this, though certainly very much so in regard to the reception which I forthwith fancied for myself. The Minister was sitting in the parlour with his wife, and the first glance told me that he was in excellent humour. He smiled and took my hand with an air of so much cordiality, that I really felt quite ashamed of myself for having so long harboured unpleasant feelings, which my superior in age and experience had apparently quite dismissed. It was evident, too, that

Mather had been speaking kindly of me behind my back ; for his wife not only talked, but looked far more heartily than she had done when left to herself.

Katharine had come back from her ride some time before this ; and she now made her appearance in a different dress, which even improved the charms of the morning. Mr Lascelyne also came down stairs in an evening garb of the most fashionable cut of the day ; and even the Minister had not disdained to unpaper his most brilliant pair of buckles. I felt internally that I was the shabby feature in the assemblage ; but, as I had resolved, I swallowed my sensations as well as I could. One thing was too obvious not to be seen ; and being seen, how could it fail to please me ? I mean the pleasure that Katharine received from seeing the good-humoured way in which Mr Mather and I were behaving to each other. As we were passing from the drawing to the dining-room, her feeling of this was spoken in a single side-glance, that, I know not how, seemed to soften my whole heart within me. Had we been alone, I could have — I know not what. Mr Lascelyne, meantime, though a beau of the first water, a coxcomb certainly, was far too highly bred to say or do any thing that could offend any one in possession of the slightest reason. In a word, the dinner went off with remarkable ease, and even gaiety. An excellent bottle was produced ; and a special toast dedicated to my honour upon my return. “ Give me leave,” cried Lascelyne, “ to crave another bumper. Mr Wald, (turning to me,) I propose the health of the new Principal.”

“ Principal ! what Principal ?” said I, smiling, I saw Mr Mather drop his eyes, and began to suspect something of the truth. But, after a little pause, Mr Lascelyne explained the whole.

“ You have not heard, then, your friend’s candidature ? You will be happy, sir, to hear that there is almost no doubt of his success —”

“ Nay, nay,” interrupted the Minister, “ you must not just say so neither, Mr George. But, surely, whether

the thing be or be not, I and my family shall always know where our warmest gratitude is due. Come, ladies, you must share this toast—A bumper to my good Lord!”

The whole minutiae of the affair were now discussed at full length, and I was no longer at a loss to account for some part at least of the unexpected benignity with which I had been looked upon by Mr Mather. I perceived that he was too full of expectation and triumph, to have any leisure for old disgusts. I profited, in other words, by the same happy influences which induce the fortunate gamester to fling his guinea to the drawer, and go home to kiss his wife and fondle his children, instead of breaking heads, china, and the third commandment. Never bid for a farm, my dear, upon seeing it in sunshine.

Two or three days passed away without any thing happening that is worth troubling you with. Rides and walks, in which Mr Mather himself uniformly joined, occupied the mornings; and in the evenings the whole family were together. I was always expecting that somebody or other, either the Minister, or his wife, or Katharine, would say something that might lead to the subjects I had been so desirous of hearing broached, but I expected in vain. The utmost hilarity, the utmost apparent openness and friendship, prevailed; but I began to feel, somehow or other, that those about me had, as well as myself, thoughts enough that they did not choose to express; and nameless nothings suggested, or rather, perhaps I ought to say, confirmed, the suspicion, that I myself, I, was the cause of this reserve.

Nothing struck me as so odd, when, after a little time had gone by, I was meditating on the state of affairs on my pillow, as the fact, that I should have been hours, days, at Blackford, without having passed one half hour alone with my cousin. I was well aware that we were no longer the children, the boy and the girl, we had been; but we were, after all, if there had been nothing more, the only two of our blood; and each of us, surely, was

the oldest friend the other had in the world. Surely there must be somewhere a reason for this : Was it in me? or in her? — or in the art and contrivance of those about us? I was sensible, indeed, that on many little occasions my feelings of awkward pride had held me back : nor was I quite without the suspicion that there might have been something repulsive in the whole cast of my bearing. But Katharine was at home — I was, now at least, no more than the visiter. Ay, but the sex — was there nothing due to that? — was not that the apology? But, then, Lascelyne? — why did I see that she was alone with him, though never with me? — Why had I found them sitting together that very morning, nobody else with them, when I went down to breakfast? Why, when we were all riding, did they so often ride side by side? — And why not? If I had chanced to rise a quarter of an hour earlier, might not Mr Lascelyne have found me, not I him, in the parlour with Katharine? — Was it not a horse of his she rode, and what wonder if two animals that had always been accustomed to be together, still continued to prefer being so?

I cast the thing about in my mind until I persuaded myself I had seen it in every possible light ; but still some darkness closed the view. I could not convince myself that there was something wrong, but I felt it ; and, though I meant to be a dissembler at the time, yet candour must confess, that I strongly suspect I succeeded but poorly as yet in the part of a *pocourante*. — The juggler that you see casting up his balls so coolly and so easily, sweated through many a jacket, you may depend on it, ere he was master of his trick. And yet it was not long ere I began to be a tolerable master of mine, as you shall hear.

CHAPTER VIII.

ERE a week had gone by, the promotion of Mr Mather was announced as still more probable by letters from the noble patron, to whose influence he had been beholden mainly, if not entirely, for all his chances of success. The news came in the morning, and in the glee of the hour the Minister himself proposed that the day should be devoted to visiting a scene of great natural beauty, which lies about eight miles up the country from Blackford. Mrs Mather was for once to be of our party ; and we were to take a basket of provisions with us, and dine in the woods. The day was one of the loveliest that ever May witnessed. The sky was cloudless blue, every pure streamlet murmured in music, the leaves had the brightness of spring upon them amidst all the glow of summer, every bank was yellow with broom, and the primroses had not faded, although the hawthorns and wild apple-trees were bursting their blossoms above them.

Our way, for two or three of the last miles, lay through the ancient forest, and there being no regular path, I, happening to be rather absent, found myself separated from the party, and was not able to discover exactly in what direction they had passed on. The trees hung their branches so low every here and there, that one was obliged to make continual circuits, and I became quite bewildered among the coppices. At last I saw a long green glade opening far into the wood, and without thinking of looking for the marks of horses' feet, I clapt spurs to my pony, and dashed on at a hand-gallop. Once and again I thought I heard voices calling ; but, in several places I had come upon trees evidently quite newly felled, so that I could not be sure of recovering my party by following these indistinct echoes. I therefore judged, that the best thing would be to find my way,

no matter how, to the old castle, which I knew they were to be at some time in the course of the day ; and, after vain experiments in many different directions, I was at last fortunate enough to meet with a woodman, who gave me an intelligible plan of route. I followed this ; and ere long heard the river rushing over the rocks far down below me. Once within sight of the stream, my business was simple. I jogged along the summit of the high rocky bank, until I came to a place where I thought my pony might keep his feet, descended, forded to the other side, on which I knew the ruin was situated, and advanced up the river at a leisurely pace, upon the softest turf, I think, I have ever seen, and beneath the shadow of fine old oaks and beeches.

I had got a little off the river, to avoid some apparently impassable thickets, and was walking my little Highlander quietly along the top of the knoll, when I heard what seemed to be a woman's voice down below. I halted for a moment, heard that sound again, and, advancing a few paces, saw distinctly Katharine Wald and Mr Lascelyne seated together at the root of a tree, fast by the brink of the water. Tall trees were growing all down the bank, but the underwood consisted of bushes and thorns, and I had a perfect view of the pair, though they were perhaps fifty paces under the spot where I stood. A thousand tumultuous feelings throbbed upon my brain ; and yet a mortal coldness shook me as I gazed. Her right hand covered her eyes as she wept, not aloud, but audibly, beside him. He held the left grasped in his fingers on her knee. I saw him kissing the drops off it as they fell. She withdrew that hand also, clasped them both fervently upon her face, and groaned and sobbed again, as if her heart would break. I heard him speaking to her all the while, but not one word of what he said. I caught, however, a glimpse of his cheek, and it was burning red. Katharine rose suddenly from beside him, and walked some paces alone by the margin of the stream. He paused — and followed. I saw him seize her hand and press it to his lips — I saw

her struggle for an instant to release it, and then recline her head upon his shoulder—I saw him, yes! I saw him with my eyes,—I saw him encircle her waist with his arm—I saw them glide away together under the trees, lingering upon every footstep, his arm all the while bearing her up. Heavens and earth! I saw all this as distinctly as I now see this paper before me—and yet, after they had been a few moments beyond my view, I was calm—calm did I say?—I was even cheerful—I felt something buoyant within me. I whistled aloud, and spurred into a canter, bending gaily on my saddle, that I might pass beneath the spreading branches.

I soon saw the old ivied walls of the castle, bounded airily over the sward until I had reached the bridge, gave my pony to the servants, who were lounging about the ruin, and joined Mr and Mrs Mather, who were already seated in one of the windows of what had been the great hall—the luncheon set forth near them in great order upon the grass-grown floor.

“So you have found us out at last, Matthew,” said the Minister—“I was afraid you would come after pudding-time.”

“Ay, catch me at that trick if you can,” cried I, as gay as a lark.

“Well,” says he, “I wish these young people would please to come back again; they have been seeking for you this half hour.”

“Indeed!” said I; “I am heartily sorry they should be wasting their time on such a goose-chase—one might wander a week here without being discovered—I was never in such a wilderness. But I believe I must go and see if I can’t find them in my turn.”

I stepped toward the gateway in this vein, and was fortunate enough to perceive that they had already reached the place where the servants and horses were. Katharine had pulled her bonnet low down over her eyes; but she smiled very sweetly, (though I could not but think a little confusedly,) as I told her we were waiting for her, and apologized for the trouble I had been giving.

To Mr Lascelyne, also, I spoke with a freedom, a mirth, a gaiety, that were quite delightful. In a word, I was the soul of the luncheon party : It was I who drew the corks and carved the pie : It was I who plunged down the precipice to fill the bottles with water : It was I who brimmed the glasses for every one, and who drained, in my own proper person, twice as many bumpers as fell to the share of any two besides. I rattled away with a glee and a liveliness that nothing could check or resist. At first, they seemed to be a little surprised with the change in my manners, especially Lascelyne ; but I soon made them all laugh as heartily as myself. Even Katharine, the fair weeper of the wood, even she laughed ; but I watched her eyes, and met them once or twice, and saw that there was gloom behind the vapour of radiance.

I supported this happy humour with much success during great part of the ride homewards, but purposely fell behind again for a mile or two ere we reached Blackford. Upon entering the house I immediately inquired for Mr Mather, and was told he had just stepped into the garden. I followed, and found him walking by himself among the flowers.

"I have been wishing, sir," said I, "to have a little private conversation with you. Are you at leisure at present?"

"Certainly — most certainly," was his answer ; and I did not wait for more.

"Well, then, Mr Mather," I began, "although you have had too much delicacy to say any thing about it, I know very well that you must have been surprised with my coming away from St Andrews in this unexpected way. But hear what I have got to say, and I am sure you will see I could not well have done otherwise."

"Nay, nay," he interrupted me, "you are taking the thing quite seriously now."

"Why, yes," I said, "I must own frankly that I do. But without farther preface, Mr Mather, you know as well as myself how old I am — and I really begin to

think, it is high time I should be considering what profession I am to choose."

"Nothing can be more proper. Quite natural—quite as it should be."

"Well, now, Mr Mather, to come to the point at once, I wish to be informed exactly what is the amount of my patrimony. I know 'tis very inconsiderable, but still something may depend upon a trifling difference in such a case."

"Very considerate, indeed, this is of you, my young friend; but I am sure you will not dream, that your friends are not very willing to assist you in any thing that is for your advantage, if you happen to need their assistance. But as to your own money, that question is the first, and 'tis easily answered. Your fortune is at present within a trifle of a thousand pounds."

"Quite enough," said I, gaily—"quite enough for my ideas, I assure you."

"Quite enough, certainly," responded Mather, "to enable you to give yourself the best education the country can afford, and to place yourself handsomely in any honourable profession you may happen to prefer. Have you, as yet, formed a predilection, may I ask, for any particular line of life?"

"Why, no," said I. "I must honestly confess that my mind is still very undetermined as to these matters; and, to tell you the truth, I think there can be no harm in my seeing a little more of the world ere I do finally fix my profession. I suppose there would be no harm in my going abroad for a year or so, and looking about me?"

"Oh, none, certainly none," he answered;—"none in the world. You can afford it, and why not? Every young man is much improved by a little travelling. Mr Lascelyne has been three years on the Continent, and he can give you every information about routes, and other particulars. But would you like the notion of going quite alone?"

"Alone, most certainly," said I. "I can't afford to take a tutor with me; and, as for friends and companions, no fear but I shall find them any where. I think, if you don't disapprove of it, of going to Leyden, to begin with. I know several young men who have gone from St Andrews thither, and they all like it extremely."

"An excellent idea,—a most sensible idea," quoth the Minister. "Leyden is an admirably conducted university. Whether you turn your thoughts to the law, or physic, or——But I dare say you have no thoughts of the church?"

I smiled a negative.

"Ay—in short, whatever line you fix upon, you will find the best preparation in the world there. There's the famous Doctor Vantomius—a perfect host in himself—ay, and Zuilius, and the great Wolfius, and Van Bore, too. In short, there's a perfect constellation of them. And, then, 'tis a sound Protestant university—excellent Calvinist divines. And when should you think of going?"

"Instantly," said I; "why lose time? Instantly—immediately—to-morrow morning."

"Well, to be sure," said he—I saw his eyes sparkling "to be sure, as you observe, why lose time? Your baggage is at St Andrews; you can easily send for it to Edinburgh; and there are smacks to Rotterdam every week, I believe. But, dear me, Mr Matthew, what a short visit this will be! Your aunt and Katharine will, I am sure, be sadly mortified. But then, as you observe, time is precious. This is fine weather for your voyage, too,—couldn't be better weather if you waited a twelve-month."

The Minister took my arm in a most friendly and confidential style as we walked together round the garden, and so to the house. I purposely allowed him to go in before me; and did not make my appearance until the bell told me, that the family, servants and all, were assembled for prayers. I then stepped into the parlour, and took my seat within one of the windows,

still preserving, at least I think I did so, the most perfect appearance of composure.

I could not prevent myself, however, from observing, that Katharine, who happened to sit opposite to me, although she never lifted her eyes from her Psalm-Book, did not once open her mouth to sing. Her clear notes were all silent. I saw her lips white, and pressed together; I saw them quiver once or twice in spite of all her efforts. When we rose from our knees, she went out of the room with the servants; and, a few minutes afterwards, her mother, who had followed her, came back and told us Katharine found herself a good deal fatigued with her ride, had a headach, and was gone to bed. I said nothing, but kept my eyes on Mr Lascelyne. I saw him bite his lip, and turn round to take up a book.

My plans, however, were discussed at some length during supper; and Lascelyne talked away very easily about packets, posts, bills of exchange, Amsterdam, Paris, "the Pyrenean, and the river Po." I was the last to go up stairs; and, although I trod as quickly as I could past my cousin's door, I could not shut my ears. There was profound silence in the house, and I heard one or two deep, choking sobs — some space between them. I paused for a moment, and sprung up to my old garret. I had strained the string to its uttermost stretch. My heart was full, and it would have broken had I not yielded. I flung myself half undressed upon my bed, and wept like a child. And why not? — I was a boy, a mere boy.

Never having once closed my eyes the whole night, I found when I rose, (about five o'clock,) that they were shockingly red and swollen; and the more I bathed them in my basin, the worse I thought did they look. — "Nay, nay," I said to my proud self, "this will never do. This part of the thing, at least, shall not be seen."

I put on my clothes, and crept down stairs as quietly as was possible, and found my way into the sitting-room, that I might write a note to Mr Mather. I wrote two

or three, and tore them all into bits. — “It will do just as well,” I said, “to write from the village — or the first town I stop at better still. I can say I walked out, and, finding the morning fine, was tempted to go on. I can say I hated the thoughts of taking leave — that, at least, will be true enough.”

I had opened one of the window-shutters, and I now thought it would be as well to close it again. As I was walking on tiptoe across the room, my eye fell on two little black profiles of Katharine and myself, that we had sat for to an itinerant limner when we were children, and which had ever since hung over the chimney-piece. I took Katharine’s off the nail, and held it for a minute or two in my hand; but the folly of the thing flashed upon me in a moment, and I replaced it. Her work-table was by the window, and I was so idle as to open the drawer of it. A blue sash was the first thing I saw, and I stuffed it like a thief into my bosom. I then barred the window again, and hurried out of the house by the back way.

It was a beautiful, calm, gray morning — not a sound but the birds about the trees. I walked once, just once, round the garden, which lay close to the house — sat down for a moment in the arbour where my father died — and then moved rapidly away from Blackford.

I could never describe the feelings with which I took my parting look of it from the bridge. The pride, the scorn, the burning scorn, that boiled above, — the cold, curdling anguish below, — the bruised, trampled heart —

I plucked the blue ribbon from my breast, kissed it once as I coiled it up, and flung it into the water below me. It fell into one of the pools among the rocks, where we had used to sail our boats. I watched it till it had got under the bridge, and moved on.

CHAPTER IX.

AFTER staying for some days at St Andrews, I proceeded to pay a few visits I had long before promised to certain of my fellow-students who resided in the neighbouring district of Fife, and reached Edinburgh about the end of the month. One of the first things I did here was to go in quest of a gentleman, from whom, Mr Mather had informed me by letter, I should receive money for my voyage and immediate expenses abroad. This person received me with great politeness, and surprised me not a little by intimating that Mr Mather (acting for his wife, my guardian) had lodged the whole of my fortune in the hands of one of the bankers of the city, and that, upon signing some necessary papers, I might, if I pleased, assume forthwith the entire and uncontrolled command of the money. This procedure struck me as not a little strange certainly ; but, after a moment's consideration, I felt extremely pleased with it. I am completely thrown off, said I ; — well, thank God I am not to go pennyless into the wide world — this is some comfort. In a word, I signed the releases next day, and walked to the bank with an order for the money in my pocket. My first intention had been to draw out a hundred guineas, and carry them with me to Holland ; but, when the cashier had counted fifty pieces, the heap appeared so prodigious, that I was content to leave the rest of my wealth where it was.

Under whatever circumstances, a sum of money, whether in hard cash, as in this instance, or in any less substantial shape, can no more be put into a man's pocket without to a certain extent elevating his spirits, than a bumper of champagne can be poured down his throat. So, at least, I have commonly found the case to be ; and this particular occasion formed no exception to the rule. I walked down to Leith to inquire about the

Rotterdam smacks, at a much more swinging, and, at the same time, more leisurely pace, than I should have been able to set forth had my purse contained only enough to pay for a smack ticket. I had been directed to call at a tavern near the pier, where, to this hour, I believe, the skippers most do congregate; and where I had now the satisfaction to be informed, by one of the most mercurial of Dutchmen, that a vessel had sailed for his Vaterland the same morning, and would be followed by another in exactly fourteen days.

Not a little annoyed with this disappointment, I was retracing my steps to the White Horse in the Canongate, when whom should I meet, strutting, like a beau of at least the second order, down Leith Walk, but my old chum, Jack Todd—a good-natured, well-behaved lad, as ever wore the red gown of Him of the Saltire. He had doffed the sorely-washed corduroy breeches; and the Sanquhar hose no longer aspired to be mistaken at a distance for silk:—in fact, Jack was dressed so splendidly that I should, I believe, have passed him, had he not recognized me. Our greetings were of the heartiest; and ere we had been together ten minutes, I had not only learned the whole history of his being established in Edinburgh as apprentice to his brother, a solicitor of some distinction, but in return communicated to Jack the object of my own journey, and the disappointment which I had just been encountering. He shewed so warm a feeling for my interests, that I gave him also, as we went, a candid account of the situation in which my general prospects and pecuniary concerns were now placed. Upon hearing of the thousand pounds, my friend said, I was a fortunate fellow; that few young men entered life with such noble appliances; and that it was my own fault if I did not meet with every success in whatever profession I might choose to follow. “There’s my brother Nathaniel,” said he; “what think ye of him? He had but a hundred pounds to begin with, and now, after being some twelve or fifteen years in Edinburgh, he is universally considered as one of the most

rising men we have ; yet how often have I heard him say, that he would have been at the head of his profession years and years ago, had he happened to have but a few hundreds more at his command when he started ! — Upon my word, I wonder you should think of wasting time in Holland — what can Leyden teach better than St Andrews or Edinburgh ? — what signifies bothering one's self with all their Dutch gibberish ? — why don't you stay where you are, Matthew ? Here you will have friends and acquaintance in plenty, there you would be a stranger to the end of time. Hang Holland !” He concluded with pressing me to go and dine with him at his brother's ; and to this last part of the strain I had no great difficulty in assenting.

I was conducted up six or seven pairs of stairs into a very neat little dwelling, where every thing spoke thriving business, wealth, comfort, and good taste. Jack left me for a moment among three or four sharp-eyed clerks, who were driving their pens in a room surrounded with green boxes, and piles of papers, and soon after introduced me to the master of the house, who, seated in an elbow-chair in the corner of an inner apartment, was dictating, *ore rotundo*, to my friend's brother-apprentice, perched upon a three-legged stool at a high desk over against him. Jack had, no doubt, given me his best word ere I made my appearance ; for Mr Todd received me in the most friendly and affable manner. Immersed as he evidently was in business, it was surprising to me to see such a fine, open, good-humoured, rosy, hearty physiognomy. I had no notion of such a lawyer as being *in rerum natura*, — least of all of such a writer. And then he had so much the air of a man of condition — such grand-looking black satin breeches, such splendid lace down to his knuckles, such brilliant buckles. It was truly surprising to see one of this profession so unlike in all things the satirical pictures I had been made familiar with — so completely different from your dry, yellow, skin-and-bone, peering, wrinkled pettifogger of the play-books. This was odd enough ; but how much more

delightful than strange to find, that such a being might not only exist in such a walk of life, but prosper so nobly in it! The circumstance was enough to knock fifty old prejudices to shatters.

This happened to be a half-holiday, so that the clerks were dismissed early, and I sat down to a small but exquisitely neat repast, in company with only the two brothers, and a single friend besides, who, as I found in the sequel, was a country client of my worthy host—a proud-looking, tall, stately, meagre laird from Aberdeenshire. Mr Todd sent round the bottle in a joyous manner, observing, that after several days' hard work, he considered himself entitled to devote one evening to friendship. "And, indeed, Multurelaws," said he, addressing the Laird, "what should carry us poor devils that live by the sweat of the brow through life at all, if it were not for these occasional relaxations? I like my work, sir; I owe every thing to my profession, and I like it; but, hang it! I would fain be a gentleman one night in the week, if I could."

"If you could!" cries the Laird—"come, come, Todd, don't quiz a Buchan-body—I'm ower far north for you now, my friend."

"Well, well," says the honest scribe, pushing the bottle on its course,—"I shall say nothing.—Hang it! you're so sharp in your country, that a plain man gets nothing but a laugh for his pains when he speaks a bit of his mind smack out before one of you.—Come, come now, Multurelaws, do you really take me for a born fool? Haven't I sight in my eyes, sir, and touch in my fingers?"

"Ah! the big diel doubts you," quoth Aberdeen.

"There now," continued our host—"there now, Mr Wald, just take notice what a sneer the Laird speaks with. Why, he can't open his mouth without letting out some jibe that's enough to dumfounder one, if one did not know, that is to say, that he means no harm.—Here, put round the bottle!—hang it, there's nobody likes to be made a fool of—fill your glasses, I say, every one of

you. — Ah, Mr Matthew," he proceeded, after his bumper had descended *guttatim* — "You see what it is to be diligent. Industry is much in this world. Industry enables me to give you as good a bottle of wine, though I say it, as is to be found in all the Parliament Close ; but if industry and attention have done so much, not forgetting the kindness of worthy friends, (here he bowed to the Laird,) for the like of me, what should not you look forward to? Ah, sir! you don't know, you are not old enough yet to know, the advantages you come into life with. I, sir, every body knows it, — and why should I be ashamed to say it? — I, Mr Wald, am a mere *terræ filius*, as the saying is. — I am nobody, sirs ; Jack there and I can't tell who our grandfather was. But you, Mr Wald, you have a pedigree, I am told, like a lord's — A grand descent, a clear line, Multurelaws, about as noble a one as your own. — This is a thing which industry can *not* purchase. No, no, gentlemen, I am sensible of my own place. I feel my place — I know where I am. God bless me, if I had had a few ounces of some of your blood in my veins, what a man would I not have been by this time of day! Nothing can make us amends for the want of this. The heralds give us coats of arms, no doubt — 'faith, I believe we may get supporters, if we will stretch our strings far enough ; but what signifies talking? — No, no, hang it! the King himself can't change the blood."

During this effusion, the Laird of Multurelaws changed his position more than once in his chair, and his countenance also varied its expression from the quizzical to the lofty, and almost, but not quite, back again. "Foul fa' me," was his response ; "now, foul fa' me, Todd, but you're in the wrong — clean in the wrong, to speak so before a young lad like Mr Wald. 'Tis manners makes the man, sir, take my word for that."

"I can't agree with you, Multurelaws," said the writer, casting up his mild eyes — "'Tis the man that makes the manners : What signifies talking — we never can catch the true tone, sir ; we have our own things, and they are

some of them very good things, and thankful should we be — but we can never come *that*, sir ; we can never reach the style of the old *Terrarum Domini*."

Mr Corneraik retired tolerably tipsy about nine o'clock, being engaged to sup at that hour with his Lady-Lieutenant. Mr Nathaniel, Jack, and I, then closed round a little round table. A free and confidential conversation took place ; and I, soothed by the kindness of the man and the manners, and elevated by the blood of the Medoc, told more, and hinted a great deal more, of my private history — than, five hours earlier in the day, I could have supposed it possible I should ever do to any human being.

The sympathy my communications were met with was not more remarkable than the acuteness with which their tenor was eked out by my elder auditor. I found ere long that I had revealed almost every thing ; but then I felt that it was to a friend indeed I had revealed it. — A servant was sent to the Canongate for my portmanteau — I retired to the same room with my old chum — and found myself once more domesticated beneath a roof of genuine hospitality.

CHAPTER X.

I DID not see my kind host until towards dinner-time next day — and then, as it happened, Jack was obliged, in consequence of some business out of town, to be absent from his brother's board. I had spent the morning in viewing the rarities of the place ; in the evening Mr Todd took me with him to the theatre ; — and we adjourned from thence to one of those obscure resorts which were then fashionable under the name and title of oyster-cellars. Here my friend, supper being over, and a small bowl scientifically mixed, filled the glasses to the brim, and began as follows. — " You will scarcely guess, my dear fellow, what has been this morning's work with me, or at least a part of it."

"No, truly, Mr Todd — how should I?"

"No matter — but you shall hear, my fine fellow, you shall hear. Well, then," he continued, after a slight pause, "you must know I have been at the Register Office, and 'faith I have been examining the title-deeds of the Blackford property a little. — Fill your glass, my dear Wald, for I believe I have news that will astonish you."

"Why, nothing about those matters can very much interest me, I think," was my reply.

"Softly, softly," whispered he, with a gentle smile of superiority — "What would you say if your father's will was nothing but waste paper?"

"I should say nothing about it," I replied; "'tis *his* will, and that's enough."

"Fine feeling there, my young friend, fine feeling indeed — but listen to me, notwithstanding. When you have lived as long in the world as I have done, you will know that a man is seldom the best judge in his own concerns: and in the meantime, I am sure you will pardon my taking the freedom of looking a little into yours for you. You love your cousin, Wald?"

I blushed, half conscious, half irate.

He paused for an instant, and went on — "And she loves you —"

I smiled my scorn.

"She *loved* you, certainly."

"Nonsense. We were children."

"She is much under the influence of her mother, and her mother's husband!"

"No doubt."

"Mather owes all his promotions to the Lascelyne family!"

I nodded assent.

"He is about to repay them with Miss Wald's hand, and this old estate!"

I nodded again.

"Was this sort of thing contemplated by your father when he made his will?"

"Come, come," cried he, throwing himself back in his chair; "we must not suffer all this. I tell you now, my dear fellow, the case is a clear one. Your father's will was executed only three weeks before his death. I believe it will be easy to prove that he was ill before it was signed, and extremely difficult to prove that he was either at kirk or market after. The deed is not worth twopence; the estate is yours. Your cousin is worked upon, duped, made a tool of, a bauble, a coin, by this sanctified scoundrel; we must look to this affair sharply; we must get the estate into the right hands. We shall then see both the Mathers and the Lascelynes in their true colours—and what's more, Miss Wald will see them too. In a word, the poor young lady is not getting fair play; and can never get it, unless through you——"

"Taking her land from her would be fair play?"

"*Her* land! that's begging the question, my dear Wald. 'Tis *your* land, I say—and so will the Court say too. Come, come, you must pluck up heart—take back the land—and then you may marry your cousin, if it so pleases you both; (you will, at least, hear of no Lascelyne for a rival;) or if it so pleases yourself, you may *give* her the land, and leave her to do with it and herself as she likes. This, even this would be pleasant—I speak for myself. I make no pretence to be above that sort of thing—the power of giving such a termination to the affair would gratify *my* feelings."

Let me not linger thus upon my shame. May you, my boy, never know what it is to hold buried at the root of a heart naturally both honest and proud, the biting, gnawing recollection of *one* act of meanness. I sinned against every right feeling of my nature. The thirst of revenge—the dream, the abominable dream, of a guilty, haughty, insolent triumph, was too much for me. I allowed myself to be flattered, puzzled, argued out of myself. Years have not softened the darkness of that inexpiable stain. Others long ago forgave me; myself I never shall forgive. I have sometimes for-

gotten those things ; — but never, never since I began to go down the hill of life. Age has the memory of other feelings, both good and bad ; but one leaves no shadow ; it stays itself. Indulge a thousand evil passions, and you may wash out their traces with tears — but yield once, ay once, to a base one, and you will find it not only difficult to weep, but vain.

With a thousand paltry little pretences I half — for it was never more than this — I half-deceived myself at the time. I believe I did really persuade myself, just at the beginning, that I was attacking Mr Mather, not my cousin. But as to the means of my attack — the questioning the will of my father — as to this I certainly never did succeed in blinding myself. The pitiful unction I laid to the wound, which the sense of guilt that I always did retain as to this part of the affair created and kept open, — my pitiful unction was nothing but that I should always, under whatever circumstances, have the power of undoing what I might do. I persuaded myself, therefore, that I was *only* seeking to gratify my vanity — and this, forsooth, this miserable *only* was my consolation.

But once more, allow me to hasten over what tortures myself, and cannot but distress you. I gave in to Mr Todd's devices. I abandoned my scheme of going to Leyden, and placed my little fortune at his disposal. At my petition, he was appointed my tutor *ad litem* by the Court of Session ; and I was a play-thing in his hands — and a trick of the High Street.

Several months elapsed ere the business was brought to a conclusion. Long ere then, convinced, no doubt, how it was to terminate, — or willing, it may possibly have been, to run a small risk for the sake of such a fine appearance of disinterestedness — the heir of the Lascellynes was married to Katharine Wald. I was humbled sorely by this news ; but I had a plentiful harvest of that kind to gather. I secretly wrote to my cousin, declaring my intention to give up my suit. My letter was returned in a blank cover — and I persisted in it. For

some time things bore a favourable appearance. It was proved distinctly that my father had not lived more than three weeks after signing his deed. It was very nearly proved that he had been ill during the whole of these weeks. But at last the decisive day came; and it was proved that all these facts were of no sort of consequence, because he had, the very day before his death, walked unsupported across Blackford Bridge — and that the common immediately beyond that bridge was, by some ancient charter, a legal market-place. The will, therefore, was sustained unanimously.

I was present when the cause was determined. From a corner of the little dark gallery, I saw, myself unseen or unnoticed, the fifteen old men in purple and fine linen crowded round their table. I saw Mr Mather's finely powdered wig among the counsel at the bar. I heard the presiding Judge conclude his speech with expressing the opinion of the Court, that, under all the circumstances of the case, no blame — none whatever — no blame in the world, could be laid to the door of the pursuer in this action: that things had borne a very dubious aspect: that the facts on which the decision ultimately followed were of such a nature, that it was almost impossible their existence should have been suspected in certain quarters: that, on the whole, the Court approved of every thing that had been done — “*assoilzie the defender, grant full costs, and decern.*” — You may imagine the feelings with which I walked home after this scene.

Mr Todd gave me to understand in the course of the evening, that the expenses of this action — what with proofs, witnesses, fees, &c. — amounted in all to L.500: but this was a trifling item in the account which I had to sum up for myself. I knew that, between this and the money I had been expending on my own foolish, and sometimes highly reprehensible pleasures during my residence in Edinburgh, I was all but a beggar. But I believe it would have added little to my burden had I been told distinctly that I was not almost, but altogether.

one. Around me every thing was dark enough ; but what was this to the night, the stormy night, within !

I was still labouring with the first fever of shame and remorse, when Mr Todd came into my room and put into my hands two letters. The one of them was addressed to himself — and here it is.

“ *Holyroodhouse, 17th.*

“ SIR,

“ On reaching town this evening, I have been informed of the decision in the case in which you have acted as Mr Matthew Wald’s agent. Some time ago, that gentleman addressed a letter to Mrs Lascelyne, to which, under existing circumstances, I did not judge it proper any answer should be returned. But now — I beg you will impress upon Mr Wald’s mind, that, if I write to you, rather than to himself, at present, I do so entirely from the fear of intruding myself in a manner unpleasant to his feelings.

“ Mrs Lascelyne and myself, then, wish Mr Wald to be informed, in whatever way you may conceive most proper, that our agent has been instructed to defray the whole costs of the late suit. You will, therefore, have the kindness to hand your account to Mr Whyte.

“ I have the honour to be, &c. &c. &c.

“ G. LASCELYNE WALD.

“ *Mr N. Todd, &c. &c. &c.*”

The instant I had read this production, I told Mr Nathaniel Todd, that I trusted he would permit me to answer for myself a communication which concerned myself only. He saw the scowl on my face, no doubt, and perceived both what my intention was, and the vanity of attempting to controvert it. He must have known something of my temper by this time. He nodded gravely, said I must take my own way, and withdrew. I folded up the insult, wrote within the cover, “with Mr Matthew Wald’s compliments,” addressed the packet to Mr Lascelyne, and, without a moment’s delay, sent it down to Holyrood.

I believe more than half an hour had passed ere I remembered that there had been two letters. The second had been tossed on the ground : I now picked it up, and saw, judge with what feelings, the handwriting of my cousin. I read these words : —

“ I write under the greatest embarrassment, and without the knowledge of any one. My heart bleeds to think that I must take this way. But I cannot bring myself to think of sleeping before I have said in some way, that I hope to God *we* are not to be strangers. I cannot believe that there has ever been enmity, or any thing that any body could say was enmity, between us. God bless you, dear Matthew, and prosper you.

“ K. L. W.

“ *Holyrood, eleven o'clock, Saturday night.*”

The moment I had perused this little note, I determined that, come what might, I would see my cousin. I resolved to spare myself nothing — to make her hear from my own lips the whole agony of my remorseful spirit. There was a certain repose in my mind as I contemplated the scene of this extreme humiliation : I felt as if its pain would ease me of half my burden. I quit-
ted my room immediately, and walked down the hill to the Palace. The open space in front of it was, as usual, deserted ; but a few blackguard-looking boys were lingering about the gate. The porter was scolding them away when I came near them ; and it was not easy for me to get him to attend to my questions.

At last he did condescend to hear what I had to say. He informed me, in return, that the lady I was inquiring for had set off five minutes before with her husband, for their seat in the north ; and that the urchins he had been dispersing had congregated themselves to witness the departure of the carriages. — I leave you to imagine for yourself the worn-out weary languor with which I retraced my steps up the Canongate.

Confused and aimless as my miserable condition of

mind was, one thing was plain enough — that I could not remain in Edinburgh. As to this I never permitted myself to hesitate; but whither to go, and what to do, these were questions of a very different description.

I had slowly ascended that strange old street about half its length, when Mr Todd's senior clerk met me full in the face, apparently almost breathless with running. "O! Mr Wald," said he, turning, and plucking me along with him, "where, in all the world, have you been? — The magistrates are waiting for you — all the jurymen but yourself have been there this half hour."

I had totally forgotten the affair, but now comprehended the whole of it. The Aberdeenshire gentleman (whom I met with on my first arrival in this city) had been, under Todd's auspices, labouring to prove himself entitled to a dormant baronetcy: this was the great, the decisive day, big with the fate of the orange-tawney ribbon, and I had been engaged to make one of the jury, (a packed one of his own and his agent's friends, of course,) who were to vote the Laird into his honours, and dine with him afterwards — or vote his claims untenable, and dine at their own proper expenses. You may easily suppose that I would have given a good deal to be rid of such a scrape at this moment; but the hall where the assemblage were sitting was hard by, and I knew not how to escape from the duty which I had several weeks before promised to perform. Besides, I reflected, or at least I might have done so, that I could do nothing as to my own matters, until I had held some conversation with Mr Todd; — which of course was out of the question for this evening. At all events, I submitted, and was soon seated among the rest, by a table covered with papers and parchments, at the nether extremity of which Todd stood with the blazoned pedigree of the representative of all the Corneraiks in his hand; while, on a bench somewhat elevated over against the other end of it, a cheesemonger in a gold chain was nodding over the Evening Courant of yesterday, and one or two death-warrants for the morrow.

I played my part in this hackneyed farce with the same silence and submission as the rest of the assize. We heard old papers and documents muttered and stuttered for the best part of an hour, ratified by an unanimous nod of assent the verdict which had been written out before we came thither, and Corneraik of Multurelaws became, by our potent decree, as good a baronet as many who figure on the same venerable roll. The new-made Sir Daniel's new-painted coach was already at the door to convey us to the tavern, and his dinner was awaiting our respects ; and I thus found myself constrained to look forward to an evening of the utmost misery, spent in a company where joviality, hilarity, and exultation, were to be the ruling powers.

I was packed into the machine with three or four of my seniors ; and I certainly do not remember to have met with a merrier coach-full, even at a funeral. The party at the tavern was what I had expected—even boisterous in glee. Toasts, speeches, and songs, kept the table in a roar, and the bottle was a *perpetuum mobile*. I tried to laugh, I even tried to listen ; but I did drink. I poured down bumper after bumper ; but it was in vain : The wine had no more effect upon me than so much spring-water. I have heard it said that it is absolutely impossible to make a man drunk the night before he is to be hanged—whether that be or be not so, I know from experience, that there are many situations in which wine at least has no power—not one jot—either to elevate my spirits, or to perplex my perceptions : and I confess I have no difficulty in believing that Clarence may have died as sober as a judge.

There was some noise in the street, and I happened to rise from my seat to look what the occasion might be. How clear is the image of that moment before me now ?—The sun had apparently been below the horizon for an hour or two—the rich warm twilight—the swarming High Street—(it was more like a square than a street in those days)—the groups of gentlemen walking backwards and forwards—the ladies in their chairs, with

footmen, and some of them flambeaux—the whole effect gay, though not glittering, full of an endless variety of colour and shadow—a softened scene of sprightliness, grace, and beauty. Some strolling Savoyards, with brown shining faces full of mirth, were exhibiting their wares to a crowd of girls under our window, and this had occasioned the noise that drew me from the table, or, rather, that gave me a pretence for quitting it for a moment. I looked down upon this airy picture, and heard the jolly lads behind me commencing in full chorus,

“ We abandon all ale,
And beer that is stale,
Rosa solis, and damnable hum ;
But we will rack
In the praise of sack,
Against *omne quod exit in um,*” &c.

I looked and I heard, John—and I really could stand the thing no longer. I stole out without being noticed, and was soon quiet enough, and dark enough too, in the little back-room which I had so long occupied in Mr Todd’s house, and of which I felt thoroughly convinced that I should be the tenant but for one night more.

I sat for some time in the darkening room ; and then, I cannot very well tell why, went to get my candle lighted. I perceived that I might do this in the writing-chamber, and opened the door. One of the clerks was busy writing ; and, in lighting my candle at his, I could not help noticing my own name on the paper before him. I asked him what he was doing ; and the young man answered me, in some confusion, that he was only making out some accounts for his master.

“ My accounts, I believe,” said I—“ I think my name is there—let me see the paper.”

He hesitated a moment, mumbled something about “ Mr Todd’s orders,” and “ to-morrow ;” but I cut him short, begged he would lay aside his scruples, if they arose from any notion of giving me annoyance ; and, in a word, half forced out of his hand several large and

comely sheets, which were already stitched together with pink ribbon in the most business-like fashion, and which bore for superscription these words, engrossed in letters of majestic stature, and enveloped amidst a maze of the most captivating flourishes, "*Account of Charge and Discharge between Matthew Wald, Esquire, and Nathaniel Todd, C. S.*"

For the principal item in this bill I was already prepared, as you are aware. But I confess that I expect you will be scarcely less astonished with hearing, than I was at the moment with seeing, "To board and lodging during twelve months, L.100!" I glanced my eye hastily over the columns, gave the paper back again to the clerk, who was pretending to mend his pen, and withdrew forthwith to my chamber.

I sat down in a storm of wrath and indignation, hating at length equally the world and myself. My own rash, fierce, and vindictive passions had deprived me of my self-respect: but, even in this situation, it was an additional blow to know for certain, instead of only obscurely suspecting, that I had been the play-thing, the sport, the bubble of every one in whom I had placed any sort of dependence. This low fawning knave, too, had all the while been laughing at me in his sleeve: this miserable, even he, was about to strip off the last fragment of his mask, and laugh in my face. This caitiff, whom I had just left drinking and singing among his boon companions, had coolly, before he repaired to his tavern, given orders for preparing this document: Without doubt, he would put it into my hands in the morning, and turn me out of his house—penniless—a beggar. And what prospect before me?—Despised even by myself, where could I shew my face? Proud, yes, in spite of all I had done, proud—idle—without means—without character—a disgrace to my name, and a burden to myself, what should I do?—what should I look for?—what remained?

A certain dark thought had risen in my breast more than once within the last ten days, and I had crushed

the suggestion. It now recurred, and I made no effort to banish the fiend that was tempting me. I went deliberately towards a little closet in the corner of the room where my clothes, &c. were kept. I put my hand into my trunk—it was a great old sea-chest of my father's—and tumbled over the contents, until I found what I wanted—his broadsword. I grasped the end of the scabbard, and in lifting it from the trunk, there dropt out of the basket-handle a certain little red psalm-book, of which I think I once before made some mention.

I was in the act of picking up the book, (though *why* I thought of doing so at all I cannot well say,) when I heard a knock at my chamber-door. I had locked it, and when I opened it, there was Mr Todd, in a sleepy, half idiotical condition of drunkenness, wanting a light. I went and got a candle for him, saw him stagger towards his room, and once more bolted my door. But that minute—that moment, had been sufficient. That sleek, fat-faced, unfeeling brute—should I really suffer myself to be hastened out of the world for any thing that he could or could not do?—Could I really have been the fool to forget that he would be the first to treat such a proceeding as a piece of the merest imbecility? And, laying him altogether out of view, what right had I to die in a grand Roman fashion, forsooth, and by that sword, too, that had never yet been stained with one drop of dishonoured or dishonourable blood? “No, no,” I said to myself, “let me at least bear what I have bound on: Heroes may perhaps be entitled to seek another sphere: surely this is as high a one as I have any right to. No, no, let me bend, stoop, work, sweat—let me cease at least to think of *pride*.”

At that moment, at least, I was a stranger to it: I was humble enough, whatever else I might be. I laid my father's sword again into its place, and then opened the little psalm-book, and read some lines in it. Old thoughts began to come back almost in their old shapes; and I could scarcely help rubbing my eyes, to see whether I had not been dreaming some long black dream. How-

ever, I was very low and humble ; and if I would fain have been softened and melted too, I see neither the wonder nor the harm of it.

In one way or another, I certainly composed my spirits into a very tolerable degree of quietness. I slept several hours, and rose calm and collected, though full of wild enough schemes.

CHAPTER XI.

MR TODD had gone out ere I left my room ; but I took care to see him in the course of the morning, and had a conclusive conversation. I could not bring myself to argue, far less to reproach. I dryly did just what was necessary for the final closing of all our accounts ; and was about to have quitted his house immediately with L.100—the whole remains of my fortune—in my pocket, when he was pleased, entirely of his own accord, to hint, that he had formed a plan for my future disposal of myself, if I would do him the favour to listen to it. I bowed coldly, and heard him usher in, with many fine flourishes, the proposal, that I should devote myself to the legal profession, and with that view, bind myself forthwith apprentice to himself. The entrance-fees, he observed, would no doubt swallow up most of my ready money, but I could easily support myself ever afterwards by the fair profits of my pen. I need scarcely say that I scorned this notion utterly ; I had seen quite enough of him, and something of the law too. I therefore answered very gravely, that my inclinations lay in another direction, and was bowed out of the house with great civility. I am not sure, up to this hour, that Jack Todd had ever ceased to be my friend ; but my disgust at the time extended itself to him also ; so I was by no means sorry that his accidental absence from town gave me the opportunity of avoiding a formal adieu.

Behold me, then, like the apostle of the Gentiles,

established *pro tempore* "in mine own hired house," in other words, tenant of a garret at three shillings a-week, in a lodging-house near the foot of the Covenant Close; master of a very tolerable wardrobe, (for you may well suppose I had run out considerably as to such matters during these months of idleness and folly,) my father's gold watch and Andrew Ferrara,—a cheque for L.100 upon the Bank of Scotland,—and some five guineas odd shillings in cash,—master, moreover, of a strong and muscular body—and perhaps not quite master of an active, aimless, and miserable mind.

I spent the day in building and demolishing a variety, not of *castles* in the air certainly, but of what served the same purpose, and in the evening repaired to a neighbouring tavern, where I knew I was most likely to meet with the most familiar of my recent associates—one Spreule, a medical student, a clever, shrewd, lively fellow, though certainly no great head for a consultation touching life and fortune, whatever he might be in a case of life and death. Tom left the crowded room which he was enlivening, and adjourned with me very good-naturedly, into a smaller one, where, not to waste words, we both prosed away for an hour or two, as if we had been two Lycurguses, shaping and arraying the future duties and destinies of half the globe. Tom was clear for medicine—I confessed myself inclined to give that walk the preference over any of the other modes of peaceful life within the scope of my chances, but avowed, upon the whole, that I still thought I should like the sword better than any modification of the gown. Tom laughed at this very heartily; pointed out, as he imagined, in a most satisfactory manner, the absurdity of going to be shot at, without the smallest probability of ever being promoted for any thing I could do, or remembered for any thing I could suffer. But these arguments had no more effect with me than they have had with so many millions of better men, from the days of the Flood down to those of the French Revolution. On the contrary, what was only one, though certainly rather the most

favoured one, of many plans in the morning, became now, simply because it had found a keen opponent in the person of a friend, not merely the favourite of a seraglio, but the one only flame — the *passion*. To say truth, my most earnest desire was to be at a distance from Scotland, and I knew of nothing that was so likely to serve for my passport as a red coat.

My friend, perceiving my resolution was taken, now began to inquire through what channel of interest (since money was evidently out of the question) I proposed to procure a commission. Here, I confess, he had the better of me ; I was sorely puzzled to point out any thing that could even be mistaken for a fair prospect of success as to this matter. However, after a good deal of discussion, it was settled that my best plan would be to begin by calling on a certain noble lord, then resident in Edinburgh, with whom I had no sort of acquaintance, certainly, but who had, I well knew, served in the same battalion with my father at the Havannah, and whose influence, I had also some reason to believe, had been exerted in his old comrade's behalf at the time of my uncle's forfeiture. I determined, therefore, to draw up my memorial, and carry it to his lordship's house in the morning.

The preparation of this paper, however, was a matter of some difficulty. I was anxious to preface my request of his lordship's interference in my own favour, with some little apology for some parts of my behaviour, of which I supposed it impossible he should not have heard. The task was in itself not easy, and I had many internal qualms to suppress in the course of grappling with it. It was not finished till late in the day, in short ; and I did not carry, but sent it — intimating, however, that I should have the honour of calling for an answer the morning afterwards.

Accordingly I was at the door of his house as early as I thought consistent with propriety, and after cooling my heels for some time in an ante-chamber, was introduced to the presence of the Peer. You may suppose

that I was not without considerable feelings of trepidation — but let that pass.

I found a much older man than I had expected, and as unlike what my notion of an old soldier had been as was possible ; but, in spite of a stately figure, and a nose of the most aristocratic prominence, lively, affable, and airy in the highest degree. His lady was knitting, and he had apparently been winding worsted ere I disturbed the family party ; for two high-backed chairs, with a skein or two across them, were conspicuous in the middle of the room, and there was certainly nothing on the table in the shape of a book, or even of a newspaper. The couple, indeed, seemed to be full of sympathy — a most amiable picture of conjugal bliss. I was overpowered with their lofty courtesies.

After a world of civil nothings, we proceeded to business. “And so, Mr Wald, and so you have lost the plea — well, I’m sorry indeed — Lady Sorn and I were just talking of you — Bless my heart, won’t you appeal ? won’t you appeal ? won’t you try the Lords ? he ! he ! he !”

“Ah, yes, indeed, Mr Wald,” said the Countess, “you must take my lord’s advice. I think no one has had better opportunities — take his advice, young gentleman — try London. You will turn the tables on them yet, perhaps, he ! he ! he !” and she nodded her highly powdered curls, and my lord echoed, “He ! he ! turn the tables ! — very good, indeed, he ! he ! turn the tables !”

“Indeed,” said I, “I already repent most sincerely having meddled with the thing at all—I endeavoured in my letter to satisfy your lordship as to this.”

“Very good, indeed, ah ! very good — apologize for trying to get back your estate ! very good indeed — He ! he ! he !”

“My father’s intentions, my lord, should to me have been sacred, and——”

“O Lord ! O Lord ! what a foolish fellow my old friend (beg your pardon) was pleased to make of himself. Leave

the estate back again to the forfeited line! Such a joke, Di!—Did you ever hear the like of it, my love? Cut out his own son!—he! he! Oh fie! Oh fie! I can't help laughing at the notion of it—He! he!”

“And why did you not marry the young lady?” cried the Countess, pointing her large black dim old eyes upon me, over her spectacles — “Would not that have done, my lord?”

“Very good indeed — He! he! — Why did not you marry her? — a comely girl too, i'faith — a pretty body enough — He! he! he!”

“That's past praying for, however,” said I, forcing a smile.

“True, true—very good indeed; she's woo'd and married and a', as the old song says.” And his lordship hummed a bar or two of the air.

I smiled again, and then ventured to remind the Peer, that the object of my visit was to inquire if his lordship could in any way favour my views as to the army.

“True, true—the army,” said he, a little more gravely; “it was the army you wrote about. But, my dear sir, have you considered — have you really considered ——”

“I have considered every thing,” said I; “and, in so far as the thing depends on myself——”

“Will you do me the favour to stand up for a single moment—there now, my dear sir—there now;” and so saying, he stepped “most majestically” across the room, and took up a position close beside me. He paused for a moment; and unconsciously watching his eye, my attention was drawn to a magnificent pier-glass, which lined a spacious panel of the wall, immediately in front of us both, whereon appeared, — in tolerable contrast, it must be admitted, — the full-length shadows of our respective persons. The old lord had drawn himself up to his utmost altitude, and his topmost curl seemed about to salute the ceiling; while I — but you can easily fill up the picture. — “No, my dear sir, — no, no, no,” said he, looking wise as Pompey's pillar — “no, no — I fear this will never do. Under the height — under the

statute, certainly—Why, you don't stand five feet three, I believe—I fear you won't pass muster, my friend—What say you, Di?"

"Oh, my lord, *you* are so tall," lisped the other old fool—"you know, you were always *so* tall—Do you remember what the old King said when we were first introduced?—I shall never forget it—it was so good—and makes me die when I think of it—He! he! he! Do you know, the King, turning round to the Duke of Cumberland, Mr Wald—and observe now what his Majesty said, Mr Wald—'Mine Gott!' said his Majesty—He! he!—'what for a grenadier!'—His Majesty's very words—He! he!"

"And do you remember, Di, what the Duke said?—You must know, Mr Wald, that the Duke and I were always very well—very well, indeed, with his Royal Highness!—He! he!—Would you believe it, Mr Wald—his Royal Highness said, 'An please your Majesty,' says he, 'he need not stickle for a long ladder when he heads an escalading party.'—Very comical notion, indeed, of his Highness—very queer, indeed—He! he! he!"

At this interesting moment, the door of the room was thrown open, and I saw three or four ladies and gentlemen advancing. My lord dropt his hand on my shoulder as he made his seventh bow, and drawing me aside, whispered hastily into my ear, "No, no, my dear young gentleman—you may depend on it, you have mistaken your line—under the statute considerably, 'pon honour,—What would you think of the sea?—let me hear what you think of the sea—The sea's not a bad idea—What say you to the quarter-deck?—Good idea, 'faith!—Good morning, my dear Mr Wald—happy to see you again at Sorn-House—He! he!"

And so I was bowed out of the presence, and had the satisfaction of shuffling through the ante-chamber to the tune, delightfully mellowed by the intervention of the folding doors, however, of "he! he! he!" There was no one in waiting there, as it happened; so I paused for a

moment ere I reached the staircase, to contemplate a most noble portrait of the old owl, leaning in full regimentals, and in an attitude of the most splendid description, upon his charger — a city storming, as usual, in the back-ground.

Mortified and disappointed, as I might well be, I could not help joining in the laugh with which Mr Spreule received my narrative. He insisted on my accompanying him to his favourite haunt, where some of his brothers of the scalpel were, he said, to dine that day in honour of one of their number, who, having just received his diploma, was to set off next morning for his native country, Ireland. I knew very well that the society was not likely to be of the most courtly order ; but, after what I had just encountered by way of specimen of "*Ista Fortuna*," I was, I must own, not over much disposed to be scrupulous on this score : and I may also confess, since I am about it, that I had some dread of a solitary evening. To the sign of the Hen-coop, therefore, we repaired ; and in company with some dozen rough, ranting, careless blades, I did my best to forget for a while the wounds, not of my vanity and my pride merely, but of my heart and my conscience. A merry crew they were, and as motley as merry : — three Scotch, if I remember rightly, and as many Irish — a Yorkshireman, a Cockney, a Dutchman, a Dane, a Yanky, a Jew, and a Mulatto : — stout, well-bearded lads, most of them — audacious whiskers of every dye — oaths and dog-latin in abundance ; and no scarcity of gin and tobacco.

CHAPTER XII.

So it was that the wild ragamuffin talk of these fellows had something about it which suited my vein at the time. I pledged them in their bumpers, smashed tobacco pipes against the wall, enjoyed the crackers in the candies, the sparrings, wrestlings, and singlestick exhibi-

tions, with which the flow of soul was diversified, and joined with the best of them in the long howling choruses of their Fescennine ballads. In brief, when, at a late hour of the night, I understood that five or six of the party, Spreule included, were engaged to set off upon a professional expedition to a country church-yard, situated some ten or twelve miles out of town, in the madness of that most feverish of all tipsinesses, which takes place, when Bacchus triumphs over a system full of undigested and fermenting bile, I agreed to make one in this worshipful crusade. Swordsticks and bludgeons of every shape were ready in a corner of the room ; and we took our departure at the appointed hour, two in a gig, and the rest of us mounted on the stoutest hacks that the representative of the West-Riding had been able to pick up in the Canongate stables.

We rode as rapidly as the darkness of the night would permit along those by-ways which prudence induced our leader to prefer : and picketing our horses in a fir plantation when we came within a few hundred yards of the scene of action, proceeded towards it in a body, with our arms, pickaxes, and sacks, all in order. We halted, however, for a minute or two at the top of the little hill that looks down on the village, and despatched a scout to see if the coast was clear. The whistle to advance was soon heard ; and, when we had cleared the wall, we found the sexton in his night-cap, true to his appointment.

He withdrew the moment he had pointed out the spot, and I was one of two that remained to keep watch by the stile leading into the village.

By this time the east had begun to shew some distant symptoms of blushing, so that our youths lost no time in their operation. Vigorously did they ply their pickaxes and shovels, and dreary enough were the echoes which the solitary little churchyard gave back from its dim grey stones and mouldering wall. The clock in the adjoining steeple struck two as they were lifting out the body ; but that sound gave no interruption. The next moment a shot was fired — a troop of half-naked men,

with pitchforks and scythes, came bounding in different places over the wall. All was tumult and uproar ; and, seeing those who had been busy at the grave scampering, my companion and I were fain to follow the example. Indeed, the number of the assailants who had already appeared was enough to put any thing like a steady resistance out of the question ; but, at any rate, the church-bell had begun to toll, and it was evident the whole hamlet would be up instantly.

We fled, therefore ; but we did not all run in the same direction. My friend and I mistook a turning, and plunged down a lane, which, instead of bringing us to the place where the horses were fastened, terminated, almost immediately, upon the margin of a small river, of which hitherto I had seen nothing. Curses, and stones too, were by this time flying thick enough behind us, and we both plunged without hesitation into the stream. I was a noble swimmer, and was delighted to find the water deep ; my companion also swam well, and we kept pretty near each other until I think we were three-parts of the way over. I was in the act of remarking, that we should do very well yet, as none of the peasants seemed to have taken the water — when I was totally stunned. I just remember the water flashing before my eyes. Down went the brick-bat, and down went Matthew Wald.

I awoke with a start, and found myself sitting in a strange bed, surrounded with I know not how many strange faces. I had just time to get a glimpse of a basin of blood on the one side of me, and a bunch of smoking feathers on the other, and then fell back again upon my pillow in a sort of half-swoon, which held me blind and motionless for some minutes, but not so deaf that I could not understand there was a grand discussion going on about the comparative merits of venesection and volatile alkalis, both of which had, it seemed, been tried ; while a third voice, I thought it was a female one, was croaking the paramount claims of tobacco-water.

My stupor, however, was dispersed once more by a

bumper of brandy forced down my throat ; and, by degrees, I began to recollect myself and my faculties. I began to say something ; but the instant this was observed, one of the attendants laid a hand on my mouth—the blankets were stuffed in about my shoulders—the bed-curtains dropt ; and I perceived that neither company nor candle-light were judged suitable to my condition.

I felt, after a little recollection, very much as if I had undergone a severe cudgelling. My head was like to rend if I turned it one jot to the right or the left ; my limbs were full of cold creeping pains ; and my breast laboured under a mixed sensation of bruises, aches, and weight—leaden weight. I was, however, altogether powerless and feeble—I lay as in a sort of dream—my ears full of a rushing and roaring sound, as of a thousand rivers—every faculty asleep or bewildered. At length, a feeling of heat began to steal slowly over me, and I fell asleep in good earnest.

How long I slept I do not exactly know ; but I lay still for a long time after I was awake, ere I thought of making any effort—to such a degree had I been enfeebled—and so true (applied as it ought to be in the case of hanged and drowned men) is the poet's

“ *Facilis descensus Averni ; —
Sed revocare,*” &c.

However, I at last lifted aside my bed-curtains, and “was aware,” as the ballads have it, of an old man of the most venerable aspect, with long hair as white as snow hanging upon his shoulders, sitting with a book in his hand by the half-opened window. He heard the rustling of the curtains, rose, and asked me in a voice of silvery sweetness, how I felt myself. But, before I could answer, he said, “Nay, nay, I was wrong to bid you speak—I feel that you are doing well—there is a fine moisture on your hand—your are cool now, my dear. Lie still, lie still, young man, and we will see what is to be done.”

He glided out of the room, and returned in a little

while with an old woman, who carried on a salver some white-wine whey, and a bit of toast. They conversed in low whispers, and shook their heads at me when I offered to speak. I was so faint, that it was no great hardship to obey. I drank the whey, eat a mouthful or two, and then the female arranged the bed-clothes a little for me, and they both left me — but not until the old gentleman had shewn me that a bell-cord was fastened to the end of the pillow-slip, and whispered in my ear, with a placid and benignant smile, “Good night — you will be yourself to-morrow — Blessed be the mercy that has saved you!”

CHAPTER XIII.

THE old woman-servant was the first person who came to my bedside in the morning, and from her I learned, that I was in the house of Mr Meikle, the minister of Kynnemond; who, being roused by the tumult in his village, had gone out into his garden, and saw me sink in the river, which ran close beneath its hedge. The good man had not only watched my recovery, but saved my life.

Perceiving how much I was recruited, the ancient handmaiden did not resist my proposals about rising immediately, but fetched me clean linen of her master's; and I was soon up and dressed. I found myself a ghastly figure, to be sure; but I felt the *vis renovatrix* fairly at work within, and was anxious, as well I might be, to express my sense of the kindness I had met with, and also to trespass as little farther as might be possible upon the hospitality of this benevolent stranger.

Before leaving my room, however, I made another discovery — a woful discovery it was. In short, John, my pocket-book — the pocket-book that contained *the* bank-note — was amissing! My purse with the five guineas was safe on the dressing-table; but I rummaged

bed and bed-clothes, and coat, waistcoat, and breeches, all in vain for my poor pocket-book. I remembered with despair that it had been in my coat-pocket; while, upon the true principle of penny wisdom, the purse with the coin had occupied one within the breast of my waistcoat. Some chance, however, there might yet be: my kind host might have discovered my treasure, and thought proper to secure it for me until I was able to get up. I rung my bell, therefore, in a tremor of anxiety; and, behold, the good old man himself came into the room, leading in his hand a beautiful little boy, of perhaps three years old.

"Ah!" said he, "and so you're fairly on your legs again:—and here's my little Tommy—he would not be contented unless I brought him with me to see 'the drowned man;' for that's Tommy's word for you, my dear sir; and, indeed, there's none of us can pretend to have the right one—"

"Oh! sir," said I, "before I answer any thing, let me know if you have my pocket-book."

The old man saw at once how much I was agitated; and the glance he threw upon me confirmed, ere he opened his mouth, all my fears.

"Alas! not so—there was no pocket-book about you, sir. I trust the loss is not great."

I shook my head, and answered, "'Tis no matter."

"Alas! alas!" said he, "I fear it must be much matter. Speak, my young man—let me know what you have lost—let me know who you are."

I can't help wondering, John, when I recall that moment, that I should have been able to command so much coolness. I sat down beside the old gentleman, and told him, in a few sentences, that my name was Wald—that I had, by an unfortunate accident, been led to accompany some medical students on the expedition, the result of which he knew; but that I was not myself in any way connected either with their profession or their pursuits—that I was an unfortunate young man;—and, in a word, that, except these five guineas in my

purse, I had lost in that pocket-book all the money I was worth in the world. It would have been no great wonder, surely, if Mr Meikle had listened to me with some distrust; but such was not the case. I saw the kindness, the simplicity of his heart, in every look he threw upon me. He squeezed my hand, and left me immediately, to give orders, as he said, for inquiring among the neighbours, and dragging the river. I confess neither of these plans appeared to me to promise much; but I allowed Mr Meikle to do as he pleased, and in the meantime continued to use all my efforts in calming and collecting my own spirits.

The worthy Minister remained from home till sunset; but he had exerted himself to no purpose. Not a trace of my lost treasure had been found. He communicated the intelligence to me with a face of the most disconsolate concern; but I had really entertained no hopes: and bodily weakness had so much deepened the settled melancholy of my spirits, that, strange as it may seem to you, I had, during a great part of the day, regarded this loss as a thing comparatively unworthy of occupying my mind. After all, I said to myself, this money, if I had trusted to it, would soon have failed, and at the distance of a few months, or, at the utmost, of a year or so, I must have found myself pretty much in my present situation. I was effectually humbled within: and prepared to think any mode of life sufficiently good for me, in which I could earn food and raiment, like an honest man, by my own exertion.

The old gentleman treated me in such a fatherly manner, that, while we were sitting together, and talking over what had happened in the evening, I felt it gave me relief to open my heart to him; and I fairly told him almost all the events of my life. He listened to me with tenderness and gravity; and cheered me with a thousand hopeful suggestions. The faults I had committed, he said, appeared to have been sincerely repented. I had learned something of the world, and, above all, of myself; and surely, if I were disposed to submit to my

fortune, and to make the best of it in a patient and unrepining spirit, there could be no fear but that I might find the means of completing my education, and settling myself in some respectable profession in due time. "You were born a gentleman," he said, "and brought up in a way that must, no doubt, make it more difficult for you to encounter the rough blasts of the world ; but this will soon wear off. You are young, and you will soon be strong again. Despondency is not for your years. The world is all before you yet ; and, whatever you may think, you have already got over the time of life when poverty is most formidable — you are a man.

"Ay," he continued, "how often did my poor mother say when I was a lad, that virtue and a trade were the best portion for bairns ! — You were born and bred in a hall-house, Mr Wald, and I in a cot-house ; but, for all that, my young man, flesh and blood are the same : and ill-off as you think yourself, you will never have harder things to come through than I had. —

"My father," he said, "was a poor man — a common working wright in a little village not far from Glasgow. My mother and he pinched themselves blue to give me my education. I went to College when I was about fifteen years old, and they sent me in cheese and vegetables, even oatmeal to make my porridge, every week by the carrier. I did not taste butcher-meat three times I believe in the first three years I was a student. But then I began to do something for myself — I got a little private teaching ; and, by degrees, ceased to be a burden on the old people. Step by step I wrought on, till I became tutor in a gentleman's family. Then I was licensed ; and I remained a preacher for twenty years — sometimes living in a family, — sometimes teaching from house to house — and latterly I had a school of my own in Glasgow. I was forty years old and upwards ere I got the kirk, Mr Wald ; and my dear parents never lived to see me in it. I married — I had a wife, and I had a son." —

Little Tommy had been playing about the room all this while. The old man now called the child to him,

and took him on his knee ; and I saw, as he stooped to kiss him, a tear or two steal slowly down the furrows of his cheek.

“I am now alone in the world, Mr Wald — almost alone, as you see.”

The servant came in to take the little fellow to bed ; and the venerable man gave him his blessing, in a very passionate manner, ere he put him into her arms. I could not but observe with sorrow, that the child’s loveliness was of an extremely delicate order ; and thought I could see something like the fixed expectation of evil in the old man’s gaze of affection.

He sat silent for some minutes after the child had been taken away, and then said, fixing his eyes upon me, “You have seen, young man, the frail offspring of frailty. That poor child will never see man’s years ! Alas ! ought I not to wish that his father never had ? — Oh ! sir, you cannot know what it is to have a father’s heart. My only son has bequeathed me no relic but one of guilty love — a poor, feeble, little memorial of guilt — I would fain persuade myself that I may say, of repented guilt.” —

The old man groaned aloud, and paused again for several minutes ere he proceeded. — “The story may do you good, young man — you shall hear it.

“My boy was educated for the Church : he pleased all his teachers at the University, and he pleased us all here at home. He had been licensed to preach, and came — it is now four years ago — to spend the summer here with me ; expecting, through some friends we had, to obtain his appointment as my Helper and Successor in my charge. But his mother’s disease had been ripening in him : he became suddenly quite another creature — drooped from day to day ; and the doctors declared that we must needs part. There was no hope for Thomas, but in a change of climate.

“We parted. He went to Devonshire, and remained there for some months ; but all would not do. He came slowly home again ; and he came only to die. He expired the very day after his arrival ; and, woe is me !

I was not with him. He had seemed so much better in the morning, that I had gone a few miles to visit one of my poor parishioners, whose family was in affliction. I came home, hoping, truly, I cannot say, but at least little, little dreaming how soon — They told me, sir, that Thomas, finding himself very ill, had expressed an agony of desire to see, and speak with me ; but I was not in time. My poor young man, sir, had breathed his last ere I could reach the house.

“ It was the third night, Mr Wald, after my poor boy had been buried — you may see the place where you sit — he lies under yon white stone, the nearest to the eastern buttress — that is the spot where he lies — It was the third night, Mr Wald, and I was just preparing to go to my bed, when my old woman, sir, came into the room in a state of great agitation. Her looks were so wild, that I was half amazed ; for, as you have seen, Betty is a staid quiet person. I asked her what was the matter several times ere she could make any answer ; and at last she just said, ‘ Oh, sir ! you may see it yourself. Two nights have I beheld it, and been silent ; but I am neither daft nor blind — You may behold it with your own eyes.’ Saying this, she drew me towards the window, and unbarred the shutters. She pointed with her finger to yonder spot, sir, and said, ‘ ’Tis there, ’tis there !’ It was a bright August moon, sir, and I saw distinctly a figure in white seated upon my boy’s tombstone. I saw it — I saw it move — I saw it rise up and sit down again — I saw it wring its hands — and I almost persuaded myself that I heard a voice weeping and lamenting.

“ Many wild enough thoughts came into my head, my young friend ; but at last out I went : for I said to myself that the dead could not hurt me, and that I had injured none of the living. I went out. I walked round the church, and entered by the stile at the corner. As I drew near to the place, I heard sobs and groans ; and, when I reached it — Oh, sir, the weeper turned round, hearing my steps, and the poor girl shrieked, and fell

at my feet. Poor thing! a sore heart, to be sure, was hers." —

"A girl?" said I —

"Ay, sir, a girl; and the prettiest lassie she was that ever our village knew. Alas! Mr Wald, the truth flashed upon me that very moment. — Oh, bitterly, bitterly did she weep and sob as I raised her from the ground.

"This pretty girl, you must know, was a poor orphan, who lived in one of these cottages quite alone, and got her bread by sewing. Her name was Peggy Brown; she had often been employed about the house here; she was a sweet-tempered, diligent young woman; and, though she was the beauty of the whole parish, no one ever had said a light word of Peggy until a little before this time.

"In short, sir, Peggy's shame could not be concealed; but, neither before her time was come, nor after, could any one get her to say one word about who the father was. She always answered in one way: — 'Leave me the only comfort I have remaining: let me have peace: I will work for my bairn mysel.' To me also, more than once, this was the only answer she gave. She cried and lamented over herself and her baby; but to this point she was firm. The child was now three months old, sir, and we had all desisted from speaking more to the poor young thing, who certainly seemed to be as penitent a sinner as any I have ever met with.

"But the truth, as I said, now flashed upon me. — 'I read your secret, poor girl,' I said; 'the father of your baby lies here — It is as I have said.'

"'Oh, sir,' said Peggy, 'believe that I did never mean you should have this affliction to hear tell of. But I thought the doctors might come and lift him, sir, and I could not lie in my bed when I thought of it. But gang hame — gang hame, sir; and it will never be me that will gie ony body a title to speak a word against him that's awa.'

"I sat there with the heart-broken creature for some time, and how long I might have continued I cannot say;

but my old woman had at last gathered courage enough to come out, and she surprised us where we were. Upon seeing this, Peggy perceived that her secret *was* out : and we took her to her home, and saw her creep into bed beside her little baby. I kissed the child, sir ; and it has been my child ever since. As for poor Peggy Brown, as soon as it was weaned, she went away, no one can tell whither. All I know is, that she had been heard to say more than once, while suckling Tommy, that he should never be disgraced with his mother if she could help it. And we now concluded, that she had gone off to some other part of the country from this feeling.

“ Ah ! sir,” the old man added, “ we weep when we come into the world, and every day shews why. Let us be merciful judges of others, and, ere we taunt the cripple, see well that ourselves be whole.”

CHAPTER XIV.

I COULD linger with pleasure on the memory of the three weeks that I spent under this good old man's roof. That time, that brief time, appears to me like a spot of shaded green in the midst of a wild moorland. But I must leave it, and pass on to the Moor of Life, which I was about to enter so barely.

In the course of the conversations we held together, Mr Meikle did not fail to discover how anxious I really was to be set upon some honest scheme of industry ; and, considering how limited his own experience of the world had been, it was no wonder that he should have fancied the best way I could choose, was the same by which he had in early life worked out the means of finishing his own education, and afterwards of advancing himself to the respectable situation in which I found him. In a word, he told me that the classical learning of which I was master, was at least equal to that which most young men who act as tutors in the families of the Scotch gentry

possess : and that, if I could procure a situation of that sort, I might, while discharging its duties, find sufficient opportunities of pursuing any particular branches of study that might appear most advantageous to my own future establishment in the world. At first, I must say, the repugnance I felt to what I had been accustomed to consider, on the rough, as but a better sort of servitude, was so strong, that I had some difficulty in fairly bringing my mind to consider the particulars of his plan ; but, by degrees, I was satisfied, that, unless I bound myself an apprentice to some Leech or Lawyer, there really was little chance of my being able to support myself except in this way—or, at least, by teaching in some shape—until I should have time to prepare myself for the exercise of any profession that seemed to be within my reach. The word *Apprentice*, whether I judged rightly or wrongly of this matter, certainly sounded, to my ear, about as servile as *Tutor* : and, perceiving that my excellent old friend thought he might have some considerable chances of favouring me in the search of the situation he recommended, while one of the other description, particularly in the state of my finances, could scarcely be expected, unless coupled with conditions likely to make it more unpleasant than usual, I gave up my repugnancies, and submitted myself entirely to the direction of his kindness.

After a little inquiry, Mr Meikle discovered that a family in the West, where his late son had been for some time domesticated, were at present in want of a tutor for their children. He wrote without delay to Sir Claud Barr, (for that was the gentleman's name,) and gave such a representation of my character and attainments, that a few days brought an answer from the Baronet's lady, requesting my immediate attendance at Barrmains. I should have mentioned, however, that I had prevailed with the Minister (though not without considerable difficulty, I confess) to write of me, not as *Wald*, but *Waldie*. I was very anxious to be *incognito*, if possible ; and this change, while it seemed to me to secure my blood from suspicion, and also to render any alteration

of the marks on my linen unnecessary, was at the same time so very slight, that I believe the good old man regarded it as comparatively venial.

Having gone into Edinburgh then for a single night, and privately converted the superfluous parts of my wardrobe into a little ready money, I returned to Kynnemond, to take leave of my worthy host. By the way, I saw none of my friends when in Edinburgh. Spreule, to whom I had written, was still skulking somewhere, in fears of the Procurator-fiscal, who, it seems, remembered certain former offences, and threatened to overlook no more ; and I was not very sorry, after all, to be saved the trouble of a partial, or the risk of a full confidence. For the youth, as I have hinted, was by no means the most prudent of his species.

A journey of three days, performed chiefly on foot, carried me from the sequestered glen of Kynnemond to the opening of that noble and fertile strath, at the nether extremity of which the scene of my pedagogical *debut* is situated. The splendour of July was upon the woods, and the whole valley glittered with cheerful hamlets. A fine river revealed itself here and there, in glimpses of light, among the deep green of the landscape — and, far down, the view terminated in a majestic lake, surrounded with dark, solemn mountains, on the summits of which the eternal snow lay bright as diamonds. I contemplated the lovely prospect with unrejoicing eyes — and approached, with slow and reluctant steps, the place where I was to resign, for the first time, my freedom. I arrived at the close of the evening, and was received, in a stately old mansion, by the stately Lady Juliana Barr — with greater kindness than I had taught myself to expect, and with a condescension which seasoned the kindness, as verjuice may plum-cake.

Her ladyship presented my proper pupil to me in the shape of her only son, a pretty boy of ten or eleven ; but I was also introduced to a circle of fine young ladies, whose governess, it was hinted to me, expected that I should assist her in the departments of grammar and

geography. A small chamber, divided by a slender wooden partition from a garret that seemed to run the whole length of the house, was assigned to me as my domicile — and behold Mr Waldie established.

Two members of the family were not seen by me until next day—Sir Claud himself, namely, who was just recovering from a severe attack of gout, to which disease his shattered and bloated form spoke him no new martyr ; and his eldest daughter, whom various circumstances of age, feature, and deportment, induced me at once to set down for the offspring of some former marriage. She seemed to be at least three or four-and-twenty, while the eldest of those I had seen over-night could not be more than eighteen : the darkness of her complexion was contrasted with the extreme of fairness among the rest of the sisterhood ; and I perceived coldness in the blue glances of the Lady Juliana, and an unfilial submission in the deep coal-black eyes, which Miss Joanne seldom lifted from her embroidering frame. The young lady had a face of singular though melancholy beauty — but her figure was extremely small and slender, and her walk seemed, I thought, to hint some very slight imperfection in one of her limbs. The sisters, on the other hand, emulated, each according to her inches, the erect and portly stature of their commanding lady-mother. Matilda, the eldest, was really a splendid blonde—though I confess her cheek-bones were too decidedly Highland for my taste.

The mode of life in this family was characterised in general by dulness rather than by any other quality. The Baronet was in a very bad state of health, and also of spirits — a broken-down, unhappy man — often confined for weeks to his chamber, and never, on any occasion whatever, stirring from the house. He was far, however, from being a cross or sulky invalid ; on the contrary, it seemed to be that he was dejected at heart, and took but little interest in any thing passing about him. The Lady Juliana prosed to her daughters ; the governess sat in the corner to admire and assent ; Joanne

was like one of the pictures in the room—and I was like one of the chairs or tables. They say the Turks allow their Christian slaves to talk freely with the inmates of the haram. Upon the same principle, the tutor of Barrmains, regarded evidently as a being of some inferior species, was not considered as entitled to check in any way by his presence the freedom of the circle. The young damsels were flattered and scolded before me, as if I had been a stick ; and, if the mother and the governess happened to be absent, the chits quizzed each other about their ball dresses and their beaux, in a manner equally uncereemonious and unrestrained. Poor Joanne neither went to the county balls, nor was noticed by the beaux. Oftentimes, indeed, she and the little fat dimpling governess were left at home for a day or two with Sir Claud, myself, and my pupil, while Lady Juliana and her beauties were visiting.

By degrees the ceremony of the place relaxed itself when such occasions came : I was patronized by the governess, and Miss Joanne found the use of her tongue. I was consulted about books, and furtively made designs for embroidery. It was discovered that nobody could row the skiff on the lake more skilfully than Mr Waldie. Mr Waldie was even made the partaker of the evening stroll in the woods. The two young ladies were never afraid of the cattle when they had Mr Waldie with them. He was an excellent hand at helping over a stile or a ditch — and he had an arm for each when the evening was oppressive, or the ascent fatiguing. I most involuntarily overheard them talking of me one day in the garden. Miss Blamyre said I was really quite the gentleman ; and Miss Joanne that I was a very modest young man, considering my abilities. Miss Blamyre remarked that if I had been taller, I would have been handsome ; and asked Miss Joanne if she did not think I had the finest gray eyes she had ever seen ; to which Miss Joanne replied, rather sharply, that she had not noticed my eyes so particularly as to be aware of what colour they were. Whereupon the gover-

ness said with a titter, that she hoped she was as modest as any one, but that she saw no harm in distinguishing the colour of a man's eyes, any more than the colour of his coat. They then talked of eyes in the abstract for some time ; and concluded, so far as I could observe, with mutual compliments ; Miss Blamyre lauding the majesty and richness of black eyes, and Miss Joanne, with equal candour, maintaining that there was nothing in the world to compare to your genuine bright blue eye ; and adding, that Lady Juliana's eyes were of more clouded azure than those of Miss Blamyre ; which last notion must assuredly have been the suggestion of partial friendship ; for, in point of fact, Miss B.'s eyes were not azure at all, but green ; while those of the Lady Juliana were not only as blue, but as cold and as bright also, as ever was northern sky in a frosty moonlight.

I found, meantime, that there was no want of time for my private studies ; and being so fortunate as to meet with kind and able assistance from a retired army doctor, of the name of Dalrymple, who resided near Barrmains, I soon made considerable progress in the theory both of medicine and anatomy. These pursuits sufficiently occupied my leisure hours ; and my pupil being a fine, obedient, and docile boy, the months glided by so easily, that I was really quite surprised when I recollected that I had now been more than a year in this place. During these months, I had once or twice corresponded with my venerable friend of Kynnemond ; but with this exception, my new world was the only one with which I seemed to be in any way connected. Indeed, so strong was my feeling of this, that I seldom or ever dreamt of looking into a newspaper. Lady Juliana and her two Misses had been from home for several weeks, and I and my fair friends had been proceeding, during their absence, in our old style. — But I have omitted to introduce you to a third fair inhabitant of the place, with whom also I had, long ere this time, formed a strict alliance. This was Mrs Bauby Baird, commonly called in the house Mammy Baird — a very aged woman, who had lived all

her days in the family, and officiated as nurse to the Laird himself. This personage held a rank somewhat indefinite about the house ; for although she lived among the servants, she had not only ceased long ago to do any work but what happened to please her fancy, but was often, when there were no strangers, admitted to take her tea in the corner of the drawing-room, where her appearance never failed to excite a very agreeable sensation. Her extreme old age, for she was far beyond fourscore, had not bowed her form, nor even, to all appearance, affected her vigour. Strong and muscular, she could still dance a reel upon occasion with the youngest. But it was her singing that was the chief wonder. She had a prodigious fund of ballads, and used to chaunt them at the fireside in a deep, melancholy, steady tone of voice that had something about it singularly interesting, and even affecting. This old girl was treated with much respect by everybody. The young people consulted her about their ribbons, the Lady relied on her advice touching the house-maids and the poultry, and the Baronet, when he was confined to his chamber, took medicine most commonly from the hand of nobody but Mammy Baird. When Miss Joanne, the governess, and I were left alone — that is to say, with nobody else in the house but the Laird and my pupil, both of whom went early to bed — Mammy used always to be one of the party that drew round the fire after supper, to tell ghost stories — or rather, I should say, to listen to them, for Mammy was seldom troubled with any rivalry. To say truth, she was one of the best hands at that sort of thing I ever met with. But perhaps this might be, in a great measure, the effect of her great age. One cannot help feeling that stories of the doings of the other world come best from those who seem to be nearly done with this.

One night, shortly before Lady Juliana was expected to come home, when we four were sitting, as usual, about the fire, and Mammy, as usual, entertaining us with a succession of brownies, kelpies, little men of the mountains, wraiths, visions, and such like diet, I happened to

say, at one of her pauses, "By the way, Mammy, I would not be surprised if you had some odd story or other about that picture that I discovered in the garret to-day? Do you know, Miss Joanne," said I, "I wonder they leave it up there; for it seems to me to be a better painting than many that are in the dining-room."

"What picture are ye on?" said Mammy — and I thought she spoke in a lower key than usual.

"Why," said I, "I mean a picture that I found to-day, standing with its face to the wall in the garret, when I was looking over the old china that Miss Joanne was talking of the other night. — 'Tis a picture of a lady in a strange old-fashioned dress. I dare say you have seen it some time."

"I never heard tell of ony sic picture," says Mammy, rather roughly; "and I think a braw scholar like you might find better occupation than reengin the garrets for a' the auld trumpery —"

"Nay," said I, "don't be too severe upon me neither, for you know I have the garrets to myself; and sure the picture may hang in my little cabin as well as in that ghosty kirk-full of lumber. I've been thinking of getting a little varnish to refresh it, for it has been touched with the damp; and if I had but a sheet of gold-foil and a cup of gum, I think I could make the frame shine again, for all its blackness."

"Young man," says Mammy, rising, "to a boiling pot flies come not. I'm thinking ye wad be nane the waur if ye had a wheen mair disciples — ye're surely fashed wi' idle time."

The old body withdrew upon this; and, some little time after, the party broke up. But conceive my surprise, when, on reaching my lonely citadel, I found Mammy seated there, with her lamp beside her, gazing upon the picture which I had actually suspended over my chimney-piece. It struck me that I had never seen Mammy's face wear the same expression it did now. She was pale as death, and her eyes were fixed on the portrait with a peculiar solemnity and sadness.

I took a chair and drew it close to hers ; but she did not speak to me until some minutes had passed. — “I see that it is as I guessed, Mammy,” said I ; “the picture has a story, and you will tell me some time what it is.”

“And wasna that a bonny bonny creature?” said Mammy.

“A lovely girl, indeed,” said I, “and a gay one too, if she was like her looks.”

“Ah ! Mr Waldie, ye little ken what sair hearts beat sometimes aneath the brightest een. But I’se tell you the truth at ance — the picture maun *not* stay here, it maun *not* be seen. Come now, like a biddable young man, and help me back wi’t to the darkest nook in a’ the garret.”

“Tell me the story, Mammy, and I’ll do whatever you please.”

“If I tell the story, I’ll be doin an ill thing,” says the old woman ; “but I ken your way — ye’ll aye be dinning at me if I refuse ; — and, to tell you the truth, I dinna think that after you’ve heard it ance, ye’ll be very like to ask me again. Will you give me your word to keep the secret, young man ?”

“I will, indeed,” said I.

She laid her strong bony hand over my fingers, and crushed them together in token of the pledge being taken, and began, as nearly as I can remember, thus : —

“Our Laird, Mr Waldie, was a very young man when his father died, and he gaed awa’ to France and Italy, and Flanders and Germany, immediately, and we saw naething o’ him for three years ; and my brother, John Baird, went wi’ him as his own body-servant. When that time was gane by, our Johnny came hame, and tauld us that Sir Claud wad be here the next day, and that he was bringing hame a foreign lady wi’ him — but that they were not married. This news was a sair heart, as ye may suppose, to a’ that were about the house ; and we were just glad that the auld lady was dead and buried, not to hear of sic doings. But what could we do, Mr

Waldie? — To be sure the rooms were a' put in order, and the best chamber in the haill house was got ready for Sir Claud and her. John tauld me, when we were alane together that night, that I wad be surprised with her beauty when she came; and, poor thing! that picture's as like her as it can stare; so you'll not wonder that John should have thought so.

“But I never could have believed, till I saw her, that she was sae very young — such a mere bairn, I may say: I'm sure she was not more than fifteen. Such a dancing gleesome bit bird of a lassie was never seen; and ane could not but pity her mair than blame her for what she had done, she was sae visibly in the very daftness and light-headedness of youth. Oh, how she sang, and played, and galloped about on the wildest horses in the stable, as fearlessly as if she had been a man! The house was full of fun and glee; and Sir Claud and she were both so young and so comely, that it was enough to break ane's very heart to behold their thoughtlessness. She was aye sitting on his knee, wi' her arm about his neck — and weeks and months this love and merriment lasted. The poor body had no airs wi' her — she was just as humble in her speech to the like of us, as if she had been a cottar's lassie. I believe there was not one of us that could help liking her, for a' her faults. She was a glaikit creature; but gentle, and tender-hearted as a perfect lamb: and sae bonny! — I never set eyes upon her match. She was drest just as you see her there — never any other colour but black for her gown: and it was commonly satin, like that ane, and aye made in that same fashion; and a' that pearling about her bosom, and that great gowden chain stuck full of precious rubies and diamonds. She never put powder on her head neither; oh, proud proud was she of her hair! I've often known her comb and comb at it for an hour on end; and, when it was out of the buckle, the bonny black curls fell as low as her knee. You never saw such a head of hair since ye were born. She was daughter to a rich auld Jew in Flanders, and ran awa' frae the house wi' Sir

Claud ae night when there was a great feast gaun on — their Passover supper, as John thought — and out she came by the back-door to Sir Claud, just as ye see her there drest for the supper wi' a' her brows.

“Weel, sir, this lasted for the maist feck of a year; and Perling Joan (for that was what the servants used to ca' her frae her laces about the bosom) — Mrs Joan lay in, and had a lassie; and I think ye may guess for yoursell wha that lassie is.”

I signified that I understood her, and she went on : —

“Sir Claud's auld uncle, the Colonel, was come hame from America about this time, and he wrote for the Laird to gang in to Edinburgh to see him, and he be-hoved to do this; and away he went ere the bairn was mair than a fortnight auld, leaving the Lady with us.

“I was the maist experienced body about the house, and it was me that got the chief charge of being with her in her recovery. The poor young thing was quite changed now. Often and often did she greet herself blind, lamenting to me about Sir Claud's no marrying her; for she said she did not take meikle thought about thae things afore; but that now she had a bairn to Sir Claud, and she could not bear to look the wee thing in the face, and think that a' body would ca' it a bastard. And then she said, she was come of as decent folk as any lady in Scotland, and moaned and sobbit about her auld father and her sisters.

“But the Colonel, ye see, had gotten Sir Claud into the town; and we soon began to hear reports that the Colonel had been terrible angry about Perling Joan, and threatened Sir Claud to leave every penny he had past him, if he did not put Joan away, and marry a lady like himself. And what wi' fleeching, and what wi' flyting, sae it was that Sir Claud went away to the north wi' the Colonel, and the marriage between him and Lady Juliana was agreed upon, and every thing settled.

“Everybody about the house had heard mair or less about a' this, or ever a word of it came her length. But at last Sir Claud himself writes a long letter, telling her

a' what was to be ; and offering to gie her a heap o' siller, and send our John ower the sea wi' her, to see her safe back to her ain friends — her and her baby, if sho liked best to take it with her ; but, if not, the Colonel was to take the bairn hame, and bring her up a lady, away from the house here, not to breed any dispeace.

“This was what our Johnny said was to be proposed ; for as to the letter itself, I saw her get it, and she read it twice ower, and flung it into the fire before my face. She read it, sir, whatever it was, with a wonderful composure ; but the moment after it was in the fire she gaed clean aff into a fit, and she was out of one and into another for maist part of the forenoon. Oh ! sir, what a sight she was ! It would have melted the heart of stone to see her.

“The first thing that brought her to herself was the sight of her bairn. I brought it, and laid it on her knee, thinking it would do her good if she could give it a suck ; and the poor trembling thing did as I bade her ; and the moment the bairn's mouth was at the breast, she turned as calm as the baby itsell — the tears rapping over her cheeks, to be sure, but not one word more. — I never heard her either greet or sob again a' that day.

“I put her and the bairn to bed that night — but nae combing and curling of the bonny black hair did I see then. However, she seemed very calm and composed, and I left them, and gaed to my ain bed, which was in a little room within hers.

“Ye may judge what we thought, when, next morning, the bed was found cauld and empty, and the front-door of the house standing wide open. — We dragged the waters, and sent man and horse every gait : but there's nae need of making a lang story — ne'er a trace of her could we ever light on, till a letter came twa three weeks after, addressed to me, frae hersell. It was just a line or twa, to say, that she was well, and thanking me, poor thing, for having been attentive about her in her down-lying. It was dated frae London : And she charged me to say nothing to any body of having received it. But

this, ye ken, was what I could not do ; for every body had set it down for a certain thing, that the poor lassie had made away baith wi' hersell and the bairn.

" I dinna weel ken whether it was owing to this or not, but Sir Claud's marriage was put off for twa or three years, and he never came near us all that while. At length, word came that the wedding was to be put over directly ; and painters, and upholsterers, and I know not what all, came and turned the haill house upside down, to prepare for my Lady's hame-coming. The only room that they never meddled wi' was that that had been Mrs Joan's : and, no doubt, they had been ordered what to do.

" Weel, the day came, and a braw sunny spring day it was, that Sir Claud and the bride were to come hame to the Mains. The grass was a' new maun about the policy, and the walks sweepit, and the cloth laid for dinner, and every body in their best to give them their welcoming. John Baird came galloping up the avenue like mad, to tell us that the coach was amaisht within sight, and gar us put ourselves in order afore the ha' steps. We were a' standing there in our ranks, and up came the coach rattling and driving, wi' I dinna ken how mony servants riding behind it ; and Sir Claud lookit out at the window, and was waving his handkerchief to us, when, just as fast as fire ever flew frae flint, a woman in a red cloak rushed out from among the auld shrubbery at the west end of the house, and flung herself in among the horses' feet, and the wheels gaed clean out over her breast, and crushed her dead in a single moment ! She never stirred. Poor thing ! she was nae Perling Joan then. She was in rags — perfect rags all below the bit cloak ; and we found the bairn, rowed in a checked apron, lying just behind the hedge. A braw heartsome welcoming for a pair of young married folk, Mr Waldie. — But noo, you've heard my tale, and ye'll mind your promise?"

She wrung my hand, and rose the instant she had done speaking, and pointed with her finger to the picture. I took it down, and carried it, Mammy holding the light

before me, to the end of the garret. We laid it with its face on the floor, and Mammy piled I know not how many pieces of lumber over it. The old woman then bade me go back to my room, and I left her. I heard her heavy steps backwards and forwards for a little time, and then she went down stairs.

It struck me that the stair was very steep and narrow, and that I ought to see that the old woman got down safely. I stole from my room again, and, gliding across the garret, heard Mammy groaning below.

I jumped down stairs to see what was the matter, but found her standing to receive me with quite her usual aspect. "I thought you had fallen and hurt yourself, Mammy," said I.

"No, no," said she; "'tis no me that will trip on ony stair that's in this house; but you're a kind young man, Mr Waldie. Come away with me, since you're this length, and I'se gie you a glimpse of ane or twa things mair that I have no seen mysell this gay while."

She always wore a bunch of keys at her girdle; and, with one of these grasped in her fingers, and her lamp in the other hand, Mammy silently led me, by many winding passages, to a part of the house where I had never before been. She unlocked a door, and stalked before me into a chamber, which had a close heavy smell, as if it had not been aired for a long time. The curtains were all close drawn, and dusty. Mammy took another of her keys, and, opening a cabinet in one corner, drew out a black satin gown, and a bunch of faded yellow lace. "This was her ain chamber, Mr Waldie," she whispered; "it's been keepit lockit up aye sinsyne, and I have aye had the key. That's the Perling I was speaking about. Look round, and say whether this looks like a gay lady's bower. Poor lassie! see, here's mair of her bit trantlums —

"Oh! that bed, that bed!" says Mammy, drawing the curtains open at the bottom — "Little did she think ance that I was to stretch her on that very bed."

"Poor Sir Claud!" said I, involuntarily.

"Ay, ay," said Mammy ; "Folks say there's naething dries sae soon as a tear, and it's true maybe ; but for a' that, I believe ye may weel say, *Poor Sir Claud* !

"Do ye ken," said she, whispering very low, and looking me steadfastly in the face—"do ye ken what the country clatter is about Sir Claud's aye gaun out by the back-door?"

"Why, Mammy," said I, "you are surely forgetting yourself—he has never been over the threshold since I cam to the house."

"Ay, ay," said she, "I was forgetting ; but, between ourselves, there's many aone believes that Sir Claud saw Perling Joan ae star-light night at the end of the shrubbery. John Baird never said the word ; but I'm far wrang, if our John did not carry that to his grave wi' him."

CHAPTER XV.

I CANNOT affect to deny that I regarded Miss Joanne with a deeper interest from the date of my hearing Mammy Baird's sad story. The absence of Lady Juliana and her daughters was protracted considerably beyond what had been expected ; and, the baronet being confined to his room, the trio were almost continually together.

One day we had been walking as usual together, and Miss Blamyre had led us, as was not unusual, to a seat in a remote part of the grounds, from which we had a delightful view of the village. The governess had been rather sentimental upon the situation of the parsonage, and dropt several hints, which, by this time, I really could not misunderstand, about the age of the incumbent, and the fine provision which Sir Claud would, at some not very distant period, have it in his power to bestow upon some deserving young man, in whose fortunes he might happen to take an interest. Miss Joanne also had

been unusually pensive ; and the day being somewhat hot for the season, our walk had been prolonged rather beyond the common hour. In short, it was the dinner-hour ere we reached the house ; and not small was our surprise to find on our arrival, that the ladies had come home unexpectedly, (some letter having miscarried,) and that they had not only come themselves, but brought a large, a very large, party of friends with them.

Your tutor seldom thinks it necessary to enter the drawing-room, until he understands that the company are about to quit it. Accordingly, I did not come down stairs until some time after the first bell had rung, and by this time it was twilight. A great wood fire was blazing cheerfully at the upper end of the apartment ; but the region beyond which, on such an occasion, I was not likely to think of advancing, was quite sombre. A considerable number both of ladies and gentlemen were present : and Lady Juliana's high clear voice was heard like a bell above the hum.

Dinner was announced, and the party began to move towards the parlour. I stepped backwards, that all might pass—and behold—among the first, a lady, a young and graceful lady, arrayed in the deepest sables—The room was darkish ; but the figure, the gait, the profile—I saw them all distinctly—With slow and stately steps, KATHARINE WALD glided by me : she passed the door—her long black train floated over the threshold. I was in a dream ; yet my eyes perused every form that followed—and at last I was alone, and I had seen no Lascelyne. I cannot say what my feelings were. I followed the last of the company as if I had been dragged by a chain. I would have bounded up the staircase, but the servants were all arranged in the blazing hall ; and I crept, I stole into the dining-room. My eye glanced once, just once, round the room ; and I began to breathe again, when I found that I had hedged myself in at the bottom of the table, on the same side towards the upper-end of which she had taken her seat.

But I was completely in a dream. The lights, the

crowd, the buzz — they found me, and they left me alone. If I eat and drank, I was no more aware of what I was doing than the silver or glass before me. There was a ringing in my ears — a dizziness on my brain. I knew not whether I had lived an hour or a minute, when my neighbours rose, and I perceived that the ladies were about to withdraw.

Instinctively I kept my face to the table, and fixed my eyes on the opposite wall — the side of the room along which she was *not* to pass. I was fixed — I was a statue ; and yet I trembled to the bone to think, that perhaps the skirt of her garment might be rubbing the back of my chair — even of my coat. She had happened to take the other way : she appeared right before my eyes — I had not power to avert them. On she came — she caught my dead gaze full ; and I saw a sudden tremor agitate every fibre in her glorious frame. She opened her lips, and instantly compressed them again as if they had been frozen. It was the work of a moment — less than a moment. She walked on : the door was closed upon the last of them. I had met those eyes once more — who could ever read their hazel depths ? — It was Katharine — the same Katharine — the same unapproachable, ineffable loveliness ; — and yet how changed in aspect and in bearing ! What cold sombre sorrow was this that had seated itself upon the world's throne of beauty ? whence that vestal gloom — that more than matron gravity — that solemn, melancholy, dreary majesty ? Had I seen her before she saw me, or only when she was seeing me ? — had I seen or had I fancied ? And why that sable garb — that attire of deepest mourning ? Burn, dull sleepy brain ! throb, throb once more, thou crushed and trampled, but still living heart ! Is Lascelyne dead — is the traitor below the sod — are the worms feeding upon his beauty — is Katharine a widow — is she free ? Out upon the thought ! Fool ! slave ! — crawling slave ! where is the dream of thy youth — the holy virgin dream ?

Had the poor tutor remained in the room after the ladies were gone, it might have excited some notice — my

immediate disappearance, of course, did not. I was gasping for breath, and I made my way at once to the open air. I stood, I dare say, for half an hour propped against the wall, just beyond the door. It was a dark windy night, and the old trees about the house were groaning, and the leaves falling thick about me.

Suddenly, two horsemen came cantering close by me. The first reined his horse, and the light from the hall streamed full upon Lascelyne's face. He dismounted, and I could not but hear what he said to his groom. "Tell them," said he, "that your lady will require the carriage immediately after breakfast in the morning. My horses at the same time ; for we have a longish stage to-morrow."

"Yes, my lord," said the man : and I saw the one enter the house, and the other take the way towards the stables.

I prowled about the woods a while, and then denned myself in my garret : and I need scarcely say that I did not honour the distinguished company with my presence at their breakfast table next morning. But how acute was my ear ! How distinctly did I hear the carriage-steps slap, and the wheels begin to roll !

CHAPTER XVI.

FROM this time forward, I was haunted by a painful dread that Lord Lascelyne and his wife might some day or other return to Barrmains, and a strong desire of removing myself beyond the chance of being again exposed to their eyes, in my present situation, began to stir within me. That I had, however, some other feelings, which warred, though with fluctuating and uneven power, against this, I certainly cannot conceal from you. The tenor of my life, meantime, held on in its usual stream ; and how, or at least how soon, I might have decided, I cannot tell ; — for fortune cut short my hesitations.

Sir Claud Barr was found dead in his bed one morning; and as soon as the decorous sorrow of Lady Juliana permitted her to fix her thoughts upon such matters, it was announced that the establishment at Barrmains was forthwith to be broken up; that her Ladyship meant to reside for some years in England; that the young Baronet was to go to Eton school; that Miss Blamyre was to accompany the family southwards; and that, my services being no longer requisite, the friends of the family would, without delay, exert themselves in procuring for me some other situation of the same kind. I learned also, that it was not understood that Miss Joanne was any longer to form a part of the Lady Juliana Barr's household; and indeed this intelligence, although it could not but interest, did by no means surprise me.

That part of the news which most directly concerned myself, was confirmed next day by the factor, who on the instant paid me the arrears that were due to me; which promptitude I could not but understand as a hint that it was not expected I should protract my stay at the mansion-house. I lost no time, therefore, in packing up the few books and clothes I possessed, and in sending my trunk to my good friend Doctor Dalrymple's, who had, immediately after Sir Claud's death, invited me in the most cordial manner to make his house my home, until I should have had an opportunity of arranging my future schemes with deliberation.

I had not seen the ladies of the family since the day before Sir Claud died; and I hardly expected to see them ere I departed. But no sooner was it known that my portmanteau had actually been despatched to the village, than I received a message from Lady Juliana, requesting to see me in her dressing-room. I obeyed; and found her Ladyship, her two daughters, and Miss Blamyre, plunged, each exactly to the proper depth, in the solemnities of grief. A few sentences of most polite solicitude as to my future fortunes were uttered; the four white handkerchiefs were applied once more to their

office ; and I bowed my grateful adieu. The two Misses rose from their seats, and the Lady-Mother not only rose, but — for the first and last time, I suppose — she condescended to shake a poor tutor by the hand. Miss Blamyre stood still — but I saw what she would have done, and took the will for the deed.

Farewell then to Barrmains, said I to myself, as I was quitting her Ladyship's apartments — but no — not until I have seen Mammy — and at least heard of Miss Joanne. I went forthwith in search of Mammy ; and being admitted to her *sanctum*, found her seated in her elbow-chair, in her new black gown, bonnet, and red cloak. She had her great horn-headed walking-cane across her knee, and an enormous blue chest stood, doubly, and trebly corded, upon the floor. The canary bird's cage, dismounted from its usual position in the window, appeared enveloped in a pocket-handkerchief on the table ; and the prints of King William, the Prodigal Son, and Mr John Knox, had deserted the wall, leaving yellow spots and brown outlines as the only memorials of all their splendour.

"You too a-flitting, Mammy ?" said I. "This is more than I had been looking for——"

"It's nae mair than I had been looking for, though," says Mammy ; "but I thought you had been forgettin' me a'thegither. Hae you gotten ony inklins o' a new place for yoursell ?"

"No, indeed, Mammy ; but it's not quite so difficult changing places at my time o' day."

"I kenna, Mr Waldie, how that may be wi' other folk," says Mammy ; "but for me I've won ower mony things — and that's ane o' them. I was brought a bairn to the meikle house, Mr Waldie, and it's an auld, auld wife that I gang frae't ; but, trowth, for aught I've seen, the cuddie, wi' its nose to the yearth, is better riding than the hie-flinging horse. I'm just as weel pleased that I have my father's auld chimley-neuk to beik in, now that I'm failin', and a' about me failin'. — Ye've seen the Lady ?"

"I have," said I; "and I have seen the young ladies too, except Miss Joanne."

"Ye may just as weel lay by the Miss, and ca' her Joan, like her mother afore her, noo — They've flung the puir lassie clean aff, Mr Waldie. Greeting for the father, and nae thought for the bairn—that's the warld's way, Mr Waldie.—But God strikes not wi' baith hands, young man: for to the sea there are havens, and to the river there are foords; and when the tree's blawn down, the birds may bigg in the bushes."

"But what's to become of Miss Joanne, Mammy?"

"And what should become of her, Mr Waldie? Do ye think that as lang as I have a fireside, her father's bairn will want a corner? The lassie will be weel wi' me, Mr Waldie. I have mair siller than ye wad be like to guess the like o' me could have gathered; and Miss Joanne has a penny o' her ain too, God be thanked! that there's naeboddy can meddle wi'; — and the house has been a' clean washt already; and nae fear but I'se mak Miss Joanne comfortabler than she would ever have been in Embro or Lunnun either, with them that never thought she could spit white. But what signifies claver-ing, Mr Waldie? — Can ye get a straight shadow frae a crooked stick?"

Mammy had taken her own staff into her hand — so I hinted that I feared I was interrupting her in something she had to do; but she said, "Na, na, I've three kists awa' already, forbye Miss Joanne's things — and this ane and the dickie are a' that's to gang wi' mysell, in the cart, when it comes back; but, that's true, they tauld me ye were to be biding a day or twa at Doctor Dalrymple's — ye'll maybe look in and see Miss Joanne and me in our bit shieling?"

"Most gladly," said I; "but where shall I find it, Mammy?"

"The Doctor's lass can shew ye the gate weel enough, man. It's no be me that will ever even her master till't."

"Come, Mammy," said I; "you must not lightly the

doctors so sorely. Do you know, I have some thoughts of being one of them myself some day."

"Weel, weel, ye may doctor a' the town gin ye like, if ye let me alane. Ye'll come in some night and see us, then, ere ye leave the country side?"

CHAPTER XVII.

I FOUND at my good friend Dr Dalrymple's a reception of the warmest kindness. He and his wife, a truly worthy and unaffected old matron, treated me more like a son of their own, than the poor destitute stranger that I felt myself to be. They had never had any family of their own; and three very large cats, as many very little dogs, and a whole aviary of paroquettes, linnets, robins, tame ravens, and I know not what besides, still left a corner in their hearts for mere human benevolence.

The Doctor had already sketched out a plan for me; and it was far from being an unfeasible one. His acquaintance, the chief surgeon of the neighbouring market town, was getting old, and had been complaining that the country part of his practice was beginning to be rather too much for his strength. "I will carry you tomorrow to the town," said he, "and introduce you to Mr Ronaldson; and I think, if he be really serious in his wishes for an assistant, my good word is like to go quite as far with him as another's."

We rode over to Maldoun accordingly the next morning, and were fortunate enough to find the old gentleman in the act of refreshing himself with a huge basin of barley broth and a bumper of whisky, after a ride of twenty miles, in the course of which, he took occasion to hint, he had forded three rivers, and earned a fee of as many shillings. Dalrymple took advantage of the moment with considerable adroitness; and, not to bother you with the particulars of a negociation which outlasted the beef and greens, and at least a bowl of toddy

per man, the result was, that if I could pass my examination within six months, either at Edinburgh or Glasgow, Mr Ronaldson would then forthwith admit me to be his assistant — it being understood that the night work and the long rides were to fall to my share, and that I should be satisfied, for the first year of my practice, with board and lodging in the house of my principal, and a payment of ten pounds sterling in cash. These terms, I must confess, appeared to me not illiberal ; and indeed I may as well tell you at once, that I afterwards found considerable reason to suspect that I was obliged to Dalrymple in more ways than I had imagined at the time.

Here, then, was a fine stimulus to my industry ; and I resolved to proceed immediately to Glasgow, (which for private reasons I preferred to the capital,) and devote myself heart and soul, to such a course of labour, as might enable me to claim, at the appointed time, the fulfilment of this highly fortunate engagement. I had but a few pounds, to be sure, but I never despaired of being able to fight through the winter in some way or other. Neither toil nor privation were very formidable bugbears in those days to my imagination.

It was now October, and as the University was to be at work almost immediately, I resolved to start without delay. A few days, however, I did remain, that I might set forth with Dalrymple's full advice as to my course of study.

I had another reason, too, for lingering some little time. I could not think of going without having called at Mammy Baird's cottage ; and I felt that it would not be quite right to call ere the first bustle of their arrangements should be over.

I deferred this visit, therefore, till the last evening of my stay ; when I easily found my way to a lonely and as lovely a retreat, certainly, as ever sheltered the infirmities of age, or the sorrows of youth. Fast by the green margin of the noble Ora, and embowered among the fading foliage of his birches, stood the little rustic shieling, for which that gentle child of misfortune had

left the hall of her fathers. The hill rose precipitous behind, clothed to the loftiest crag with copsewood, from the midst of which, here and there, the red gigantic trunks of the native pine towered upwards with their broad sable canopies. The wide stream rolling in heavy murmurs close underneath the branches of the trees, its dark-brown waters gleaming with the gold of the sunset, appeared to cut off the wilderness it embellished from every intrusion of the world. A small skiff lay chained to the bank — and slowly did I urge it, with my single strength, against the deep and steady flow of the autumnal river.

From without, the appearance of the cottage itself was rude, and even desolate ; but within, the habits of another life had already, in the course of but a few days, begun their triumph. I had to stoop ere I could pass the threshold ; and I trod upon a floor of naked earth. But the exquisite cleanliness that had entered with the new inhabitants, had of itself robbed poverty of all its meanness. Every thing upon the walls shone bright in the blaze of the nicely-trimmed wood fire, and Mammy sat in her elbow-chair at the side of it, a perfect specimen of the majestic repose of extreme, but unbending age. It seemed to me that there was something far more grand about the whole appearance of the old woman, now that I saw her under her own paternal roof. The bluntness of address and expression, which had before been a sort of oddity to amuse a circle of tolerant superiors, was now the natural privilege of independence ; though, indeed, I am not sure that the sense of home, and the instinct of hospitality, had not somewhat softened already the external manifestations of a temper, which no change of circumstances could have essentially altered. I was received with courtesy — even with grace ; and when, a minute or two afterwards, Miss Joanne came into the room, and, modestly saluting me, drew her stool towards Mammy's knee, I really could not help thinking, that, in spite of all the young lady's native elegance of aspect and carriage, a stranger might easily have been deceived,

and supposed himself to be contemplating a family group.

I, you will have no great difficulty in believing, could not contemplate it without some feelings of awkwardness, as well as of admiration. The situation in which I saw Joanne Barr was new ; and her demeanour, I could not help thinking, was almost as greatly changed. We had been used to treat each other like friends—some spell seemed now to hover over us both. Our eyes seldom met, and neither addressed more than a few syllables to the other—she took her work, and I sat listening, or pretending to listen, to Mammy. At last, I contrived to make it be understood that I had come to take my farewell ; that I was to leave the country the next morning. Mammy gave me her blessing very affectionately, and I bowed to Joanne. The poor girl said nothing, but (in a very low whisper it was) “I wish you well, sir, wherever you go.” She did not put out her hand, and I retired, stammering more good-byes.

I jumped into my little boat, and had pushed myself a few yards from the brink, when I heard my name called in Joanne’s sweet voice, and perceived that she had followed me to the bank of the river, and was holding something towards me in her hand. I ran the skiff in again, and she stooped to give me my gloves, which I had left behind me. Our hands touched each other—and, in the deepening twilight, and in the midst of some confusion of my own, I could not be blind to the blush, the deep, grave, timid blush, and the troubled workings of that half-averted eye. How much may pass in a moment ! My little boat was out in the stream again almost instantly, and yet the words *return* and *hope* had been whispered ; and while, in rowing across the river, my eyes were fixed upon the lowly cabin, I perceived that a shadow was still lingering in the window—and a soft dream floated over my heart, that some day I should indeed return, and that the world, after all, might still retain some visions of hope—ay, of tenderness and soothing consolation, for me—even for me. No fiery

pulse beat — no maddening ecstasy of passion fluttered in my brain : — these were strings which had been snapt ; but a calm, pensive feeling, was deep upon me. I cannot explain it. No man loves twice, perhaps, in the same sense of the word. But, although the pine-tree will never sprout again after he has been levelled to the ground, what need hinder plants of humbler stature, yet of softer foliage, to spring from the soil beneath which his ponderous roots are mouldering ?

CHAPTER XVIII.

I LEFT my kind friends the Dalrymples, and was soon established at my new University. Having but one season to work there, I was, of course, constrained to fee an extraordinary number of Professors ; and, by the time I had done this, and purchased the books which they severally informed me were necessary, I found my originally slender purse very light indeed in my pocket. As for surgical instruments, I was entirely spared that expense, being furnished already with a very complete set by Dr Dalrymple's kindness.

If I was poor, however, I had no objections to living poorly. After attending classes and hospitals from day-break to sunset, I contented myself, young gentleman, with a dinner and supper in one, of bread and milk — or, perhaps, a mess of potatoes, with salt for their only sauce. When you, in shooting or fishing, happen to enter a peasant's cottage, I have no doubt you think the smell of the potato pot is extremely delightful, and consider the meal it furnishes almost as a luxury. But you have never tried the thing fairly, as I did. Depend on it, 'tis worth a trial, notwithstanding. The experience of that winter has not, I assure you, been thrown away upon me. I despised then, and I despise now, the name of luxury. I never worked half so hard, nor lived half so miserably, and yet, never was my head more clear, my nerves more firmly strung, my bodily condition

more strenuously athletic ; — and yet, I had come to this all at once from a mansion and table of the most refined order. True, sir ; but I had come to it also from a mansion and a table that sheltered and fed me as a domestic hireling. This also is what you never have experienced : I assure you, I used to sit over my own little bare board, in that miserable dungeon in the Auld Vennel of Glasgow, and scrape my kebbock with the feelings of a king, compared to what I had when I was picking and choosing among all the made dishes of the solemn table at Barrmains. A deal table, a half-broken chair, and a straw pallet, were all the furniture I had about me ; and very rarely did I indulge myself with a fire. But I could wrap a blanket over my legs, trim my lamp, and plunge into the world of books, and forget every thing.

When a little time had passed, however, I found that, even to live in this manner, I must do something. I therefore made application to some of my Professors, and they were good enough to procure for me an hour or two of private teaching in the evenings. The money which this gave me was very little matter ; but it was something, and it was enough. To say truth, I should have had recourse to this plan sooner, but for my anxiety to take nothing from the time which I could by any possibility devote to my own studies.

I confess that I sometimes felt a queer sensation in my stomach, when repairing after dinner to some wealthy burgess's house, my nostrils were saluted in his lobby with the amiable fragrance of soup, roast-meat, rum-punch, and the like dainties. But this was nothing to speak of. I was far more frequently tempted with the early odour of a baker's basket ; and, when I had a few spare pence in my pocket, used to buy a loaf *en passant*, and devour it as I went on my way —

“ Like hungry Jew, in wilderness,
Rejoicing o'er his manna.”

I had an aim before me, and I had bread, and I desired no more.

I was seldom destined, however, to mark many succeeding days with the white stone; and two unhappy accidents — the first was an accident, and I was accidentally concerned with the other — came successively to interrupt the tenor of this humble, peaceful, and, I may add, virtuous life.

In the dissecting-room, I one day chanced to make a slight puncture in my fore-finger with a very filthy scalpel. I thought nothing of the wound at the moment; but an hour or two afterwards, as I was sitting in my room, I felt a throbbing in the place, that alarmed me, and, unbinding the hand, perceived a broad greenish pustule, the nature of which I could not for an instant mistake. I called to a brother student whose room adjoined mine, and told him that I knew I had poisoned myself, and that, unless the spot was cut out instantly, I was a dead man. The poor young lad shook and trembled like a leaf; but I had my thread tied round the root of the finger, and desired him to cut forthwith. He made his incision bravely; but the moment he saw the blood spout, he grew quite sick, and the knife fell from his hand. I saw there was nothing for it but to act entirely for myself. He stood by me, and saw me, with horror, no doubt, grasp the cord in my teeth, and scrape the flesh clean off the bone. I fainted the moment it was done; but this was fortunate, for a neighbouring surgeon came ere the blood would flow again, and my poor hand was soon doctored *secundum artem*. This accident confined me for some time to my room; and, when I was able once more to go out, behold I had new pupils to seek, for my old ones had provided themselves in the interim with skin-whole preceptors.

The other story is one of a more serious character; and although I believe you may have heard it in some shape, I must be permitted to give my own version.

I lodged in the house of a poor shoemaker, by name John M'Ewan. He had no family but his wife, who, like himself, was considerably beyond the meridian of life. The couple were very poor, as their house, and

every thing about their style of living, shewed ; but a worthier couple, I should have had no difficulty in saying, were not to be found in the whole city. When I was sitting in my own little cell, busy with my books, late at night, I used to listen with reverence and delight to the psalm which the two old bodies sung, or rather, I should say, *croon'd* together, before they went to bed. Tune there was almost none ; but the low articulate, quiet chaunt, had something so impressive and solemnizing about it, that I missed not melody. John himself was a hard-working man, and, like most of his trade, had acquired a stooping attitude, and a dark, saffron hue of complexion. His close-cut greasy black hair suited admirably a set of strong, massive, iron features. His brow was seamed with firm, broad-drawn wrinkles, and his large grey eyes seemed to gleam, when he deigned to uplift them, with the cold, haughty independence of virtuous poverty. John was a rigid Cameronian, indeed ; and every thing about his manners spoke the world-despising pride of his sect. His wife was a quiet, good body, and seemed to live in perpetual adoration of her stern cobbler. I had the strictest confidence in their probity, and would no more have thought of locking my chest ere I went out, than if I had been under the roof of an apostle.

One evening I came home, as usual, from my tutorial trudge, and entered the kitchen, where they commonly sat, to warm my hands at the fire, and get my candle lighted. Jean was by herself at the fireside, and I sat down beside her for a minute or two. I heard voices in the inner room, and easily recognized the hoarse grunt which John M'Ewan condescended, on rare occasions, to set forth as the representative of laughter. The old woman told me that the goodman had a friend from the country with him—a farmer, who had come from a distance to sell ewes at the market. Jean, indeed, seemed to take some pride in the acquaintance, enlarging upon the great substance and respectability of the stranger. I was chatting away with her, when we heard some noise

from the spence as if a table or chair had fallen—but we thought nothing of this, and talked on. A minute after, John came from the room, and shutting the door behind him, said, “I’m going out for a moment, Jean; Andrew’s had ower muckle of the fleshers’ whisky the day, and I maun stap up the close to see after his beast for him.—Ye needna gang near him till I come back.”

The cobbler said this, for any thing that I could observe, in his usual manner; and, walking across the kitchen, went down stairs as he had said. But imagine, my friend, for I cannot describe the feelings with which, some five minutes perhaps after he had disappeared, I, chancing to throw my eyes downwards, perceived a dark flood creeping, firmly and broadly, inch by inch, across the sanded floor towards the place where I sat. The old woman had her stocking in her hand—I called to her without moving, for I was nailed to my chair—“See there! what is that?”

“Andrew Bell has coupit our water-stoup,” said she, rising.

I sprung forwards, and dipt my finger in the stream—“Blood, Jean, blood!”

The old woman stooped over it, and touched it also; she instantly screamed out, “Blood, ay, blood!” while I rushed on to the door from below which it was oozing. I tried the handle, and found it was locked—and spurned it off its hinges with one kick of my foot. The instant the timber gave way, the black tide rolled out as if a dam had been breaking up, and I heard my feet plash in the abomination as I advanced. What a sight within! The man was lying all his length on the floor; his throat absolutely severed to the spine. The whole blood of the body had run out. The table, with a pewter pot or two, and a bottle upon it, stood close beside him, and two chairs, one half-tumbled down and supported against the other. I rushed instantly out of the house, and cried out, in a tone that brought the whole neighbourhood about me. They entered the house—Jean had disappeared—there was nothing in it but the corpse and the

blood, which had already found its way to the outer staircase, making the whole floor one puddle. There was such a clamour of surprise and horror for a little while, that I scarcely heard one word that was said. A bell in the neighbourhood had been set in motion — dozens, scores, hundreds of people were heard rushing from every direction towards the spot. A fury of execration and alarm pervaded the very breeze. In a word, I had absolutely lost all possession of myself, until I found myself grappled from behind, and saw a Town's-officer pointing the bloody knife towards me. A dozen voices were screaming, " 'Tis a doctor's knife — this is the young doctor that bides in the house — this is the man."

Of course this restored me at once to my self-possession. I demanded a moment's silence, and said, "It is my knife, and I lodge in the house; but John M'Ewan is the man that has murdered his friend."

"John M'Ewan!" roared some one in a voice of tenfold horror; "our elder John M'Ewan a murderer! Wretch! wretch! how dare ye blaspheme?"

"Carry me to jail immediately," said I, as soon as the storm subsided a little — "load me with all the chains in Glasgow, but don't neglect to pursue John M'Ewan."

I was instantly locked up in the room with the dead man, while the greater part of the crowd followed one of the officers. Another of them kept watch over me until one of the magistrates of the city arrived. This gentleman, finding that I had been the person who first gave the alarm, and that M'Ewan and his wife were both gone, had little difficulty, I could perceive, in doing me justice in his own mind. However, after he had given new orders for the pursuit, I told him that, as the people about were evidently unsatisfied of my innocence, the best and the kindest thing he could do to me would be to place me forthwith within the walls of his prison; there I should be safe at all events, and I had no doubt, if proper exertions were made, the guilty man would not only be found, but found immediately. My person being searched, nothing suspicious, of course, was found upon

it ; and the good bailie soon had me conveyed, under a proper guard, to the place of security — where, you may suppose, I did not, after all, spend a very pleasant night. The jail is situated in the heart of the town, where the four principal streets meet ; and the glare of hurrying lights, the roar of anxious voices, and the eternal tolling of the alarm bell — these all reached me through the bars of the cell, and, together with the horrors that I had really witnessed, were more than enough to keep me in no enviable condition.

Jean was discovered, in the gray of the morning, crouching under one of the trees in the Green — and being led immediately before the magistrates, the poor trembling creature confirmed, by what she said, and by what she did not say, the terrible story which I had told. Some other witnesses having also appeared, who spoke to the facts of Andrew Bell having received a large sum of money in M'Ewan's sight at the market, and been seen walking to the Vennel afterwards, arm in arm with him — the authorities of the place were perfectly satisfied, and I was set free, with many apologies for what I had suffered : But still no word of John M'Ewan.

It was late in the day ere the first traces of him were found—and such a trace ! An old woman had died that night in a cottage many miles from Glasgow—when she was almost *in articulo mortis*, a stranger entered the house, to ask a drink of water — an oldish dark man, evidently much fatigued with walking. This man, finding in what great affliction the family was—this man, after drinking a cup of water, knelt down by the bedside, and prayed—a long, an awful, a terrible prayer. The people thought he must be some travelling field-preacher. He took the Bible into his hands—opened it, as if he meant to read aloud—but shut the book abruptly, and took his leave. This man had been seen by these poor people to walk in the direction of the sea.

They traced the same dark man to Irvine, and found that he had embarked on board of a vessel which was

just getting under sail for Ireland. The officers immediately hired a small brig, and sailed also. A violent gale arose, and drove them for shelter to the Isle of Arran. They landed, the second night after they had left Irvine, on that bare and desolate shore—they landed, and behold, the ship they were in pursuit of at the quay.

The captain acknowledged at once that a man corresponding to their description, had been one of his passengers from Irvine—he had gone ashore but an hour ago.

They searched—they found M'Ewan striding by himself close to the sea-beach, amidst the dashing spray—his Bible in his hand. The instant he saw them he said—"You need not tell me your errand—I am he you seek—I am John M'Ewan, that murdered Andrew Bell. I surrender myself your prisoner. God told me but this moment that ye would come and find me; for I opened his word, and the first text that my eye fell upon was *this*." He seized the officer by the hand, and laid his finger upon the page—"See you there?" said he; "Do you see the Lord's own blessed decree? '*Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.*' And there," he added, plucking a pocket-book from his bosom—"there, friends, is Andrew Bell's siller—ye'll find the haill o't there, an be not three half-crowns and a sixpence. Seven-and-thirty pounds was the sum for which I yielded up my soul to the temptation of the Prince of the Power of the Air—Seven-and-thirty pounds—Ah, my brethren! call me not an olive, until thou see me gathered. I thought that I stood fast, and behold ye all how I am fallen!"

I saw this singular fanatic tried. He would have pleaded guilty; but, for excellent reasons, the Crown Advocate wished the whole evidence to be led. John had dressed himself with scrupulous accuracy in the very clothes he wore when he did the deed. The blood of the murdered man was still visible upon the sleeve of his blue coat. When any circumstance of peculiar atrocity was mentioned by a witness, he signified, by a

solemn shake of his head, his sense of its darkness and its conclusiveness ; and when the Judge, in addressing him, enlarged upon the horror of his guilt, he, standing right before the bench, kept his eye fixed with calm earnestness on his Lordship's face, assenting now and then to the propriety of what he said, by exactly that sort of see-saw gesture which you may have seen escape now and then from the devout listener to a pathetic sermon or sacramental service. John, in a short speech of his own, expressed his sense of his guilt ; but even then he borrowed the language of Scripture, styling himself " a sinner, and the chief of sinners." Never was such a specimen of that insane pride. The very agony of this man's humiliation had a spice of holy exultation in it ; there was in the most penitent of his lugubrious glances still something that said, or seemed to say—" Abuse me—spurn me as you will—I loathe myself also ; but this deed is Satan's." Indeed, he always continued to speak quite gravely of his " trespass," his " back-sliding," his " sore temptation !"

I was present also with him during the final scene. His irons had been knocked off ere I entered the cell ; and clothed as he was in a most respectable suit of black, and with that fixed and imperturbable solemnity of air and aspect, upon my conscience, I think it would have been a difficult matter for any stranger to pick out the murderer among the group of clergymen that surrounded him. In vain did these good men labour to knock away the absurd and impious props upon which the happy fanatic leaned himself. He heard what they said, and instantly said something still stronger himself—but only to shrink back again to his own fastness with redoubled confidence. " He had *once* been right, and he could not be wrong ; he had been *permitted to make a sore stumble !*" This was his utmost concession.

What a noble set of nerves had been thrown away here ! He was led, sir, out of the dark, damp cellar, in which he had been chained for weeks, and brought at once into the open air. His first step into light was

upon his scaffold!—and what a moment! In general, at least in Scotland, the crowd, assembled upon such occasions, receive the victim of the law with all the solemnity of profoundest silence; not unfrequently there is even something of the respectful, blended with compassion, on that myriad of faces. But here, sir, the moment M'Ewan appeared, he was saluted with one universal shout of horror—a huzza of mingled joy and triumph, and execration and laughter; cats, rats, every filth of the pillory, showered about the gibbet. I was close by his elbow at that terrific moment, and I laid my finger on his wrist. As I live, there was never a calmer pulse in this world—slow, full, strong; I feel the iron beat of it at this moment.

There happened to be a slight drizzle of rain at the moment; observing which, he turned round and said to the Magistrates,—“Dinna come out—dinna come out, your honours, to weet yourselves. It's beginning to rain, and the lads are uncivil at ony rate, poor thoughtless creatures!”

He took his leave of this angry mob in a speech which would not have disgraced a martyr, embracing the stake of glory,—and the noose was tied. I observed the brazen firmness of his limbs after his face was covered. He flung the handkerchief with an air of semi-benediction, and died without one apparent struggle.

CHAPTER XIX.

I was interrupted a good deal in consequence of these unhappy incidents; and I had also considerable trouble ere I succeeded in getting my old landlady established in the Town's hospital. However, I had laboured so effectually on the whole, that I passed my examination with some *eclat*; and, in short, the first of May found me in full possession of the document which I had come in quest of,—as also of a few books and instruments, and a

shabby-genteel suit of snuff-colour. I made my appearance at Maldoun with literally one guinea in my pocket.

I was well received by the Dalrymples, and also by Mr Ronaldson, and commenced operations immediately.

The life I had thus entered upon is, I verily believe, as hard as any in the world. My principal had long been in possession of the chief practice in the town, and almost the whole of the country round about,—a wild, pastoral district generally. I seldom lay down at night, until I had completely knocked up one of the stoutest gray geldings that ever Mull exported; and there were ten chances to one against my being suffered to sleep two hours without being roused again, perhaps to set off ten or fifteen miles *instantly*. No Arab of the desert wears out more stirrup-leather than a well-employed Scottish country surgeon. I may say that I lived on horseback. This fatiguing mode of existence was not, however, without its delights. I was fond of riding all my days; and I was also very fond of the country, and the country people. I enjoyed dashing down the windy glens at midnight; and I thought no more of swimming my horse across a roaring mountain stream, or even a small lake, than of eating my breakfast,—for which last feat, by the way, the former might form no bad preparative. I took a pleasure in observing the ways of going on in the different places I was called to. I partook in the bowl of punch, with which the farmer moistened his anxiety during the confinement of his spouse,—listened to the tea-table chat of the gossips,—heard the news of last month from the laird, or the fashions of last year from the lady,—discussed the characters of Lord Granby and the Hereditary Prince with the old epaulette—the rate of the fiars with the minister,—tasted whisky reaming hot from the still,—and rode cheek-by-jowl with the justice, the exciseman, or the smuggler, just as it might happen.

To speak seriously, I believe your medical man has, at the least, as fair opportunities as any other of studying

human nature as it is. The clergyman moves about without seeing much of the truth of things; for this plain reason, that people are always under a certain measure of restraint when the black coat is in the room; — a fact, by the way, which shews the utter absurdity of allowing men to take holy orders at a very early period of their lives. He who is ordained at one-and-twenty, will never have much more than the personal knowledge of a boy whereby to correct the impressions he may derive from books. Exceptions, of course, there are; but this you may rely on, it is the rule: — and, I think, if even the Church of England said thirty in place of twenty-three, it would be a wise change. If the divine sees the picture through an unfair varnish, the lawyer, on the other hand, feeds his eyes, almost without exception, on the dark side of the tablet. All men, and women too, are mean when they go to law. Persons who, in general life, are even distinguished for generosity, sink scruples when the litiscontestation is fairly begun, and say “in war all is fair.” Accordingly, who ever talked with an old lawyer without perceiving his thorough belief in the universal depravity of the species? But not as with either of these is it with the brothers of my quondam trade. No man is a hero to his valet; and few can play the hypocrite effectually to their doctor. No, sir, people cannot wear the mask always. You come in upon them at all hours, — you see them in every diversity of health and spirits, — and, if you have eyes to see, and ears to hear, you must understand things. I, for one, am free to say, that my experience of this kind leans, upon the whole, to the favourable side. It is true, that I have seen the pompous stoic frightened out of his toothache by the mere sight of my forceps; and perceived, that it is possible to make an edifying appearance in church on Sunday, with one’s wife and family “all a-rowe,” and yet to be *dans son interieur* not a little of the tyrant. It is also true, that I have found most exemplary wives not indisposed to flirt with the doctor, when the husband’s leg was in a box. But I have seen

many more agreeable matters than these. I have seen the rough cynic of the world sitting up three nights on end at a bed-side ;—I have seen the gay, fine lady performing offices from which a menial would have shrunk ;—I have seen heirs shed genuine tears. The old proverb tells us, that “the sun melts the snow, and shews the dirt below ;” but, in spite of fifty adages, I believe the roots of real virtue gain strength beneath the frost of adversity.

You wonder a little, I perceive, that I have indulged in this digression before saying any thing about a certain romantic cottage by the banks of Ora. Many a time, nevertheless, had I found my way thither all this while. From many widely separate points of the horizon did my way homewards to Maldoun lie by that noble stream. Many a cup of tea did I drink in that little lowly cabin, which might now lay claim to the character of a very neat and comfortable parlour ; many a comely slice of bread and butter did Mammy dip in her saucer of *carries* for me there ; many a potato did she skilfully toast in the ashes of that bright hearth ; not a few *quaighs* did she brim from that queer, old, paunchy, Dutch bottle, the unobtrusive tenant of that quiet little *aumrie* ; ay, and many a time had I, ere the summer was over, sat under those old spreading trees, and watched the sun-set die upon that glassy stream with Joanne. Many times had I climbed the wooded hill with her, and, stretched upon the blooming heather, gazed, or seemed to gaze, on the wide rich valley, river, lake, and hamlet, sleeping in the twilight below. Need I whisper the result ? Long ere the winter came to freeze the waters of Ora, I believed myself to be every thing to this gentle soul, and would fain have believed, also, that she was every thing to me. I will not disguise myself—I will conceal nothing from you. There was always a certain dark, self-reproaching thought that haunted me. A thousand and a thousand times did my lips tremble to utter, “I love you, Joanne ; but it is not *that* love——” A thousand times did I say to myself, “You are deceiv-

ing this mild angel. — But then, why give pain in the midst of pleasure? — why scare those gentle eyes with the exposure of that seared and blasted bosom? No, no; forget idle dreams, and live. Be a man; rely upon your manhood. Your heart is not exhausted. Let the gentle stream well freely, though the torrent be dried up.”

I loved this meekest of women; and I married her as soon as the year of my probation had expired.

The arrangements into which Mr Ronaldson and I had entered, enabled me to carry my wife home to a small but not uncomfortable house at the end of the Wellgate of Maldoun, with a very pretty little garden behind it towards the river. It had been strongly the wish of both Joanne and myself, that our friend Mammy should take up her residence under our roof, whenever we should have one. But Mammy was decidedly against this plan; and we had the satisfaction of seeing a very respectable young woman, a distant relation, established with her in the cottage ere my wife left it. We were married in the presence of our venerable friend; and walked by ourselves, in the dusk of the same evening, to our new abode.

I must have been a savage indeed had I not been contented now. What a difference, after coming from a long and heavy day's work, between repairing to Mr Ronaldson's house, and going *home*! Instead of a dry, old, pigtailed oddity of a bachelor, poring over some antiquated newspaper, with his pipe in his mouth, in the chimney corner, or boring me with eternal questions and commentaries touching the cases in which I had been busied, — what a different sort of affair was it, to be welcomed, at the door of my own house, by that gentle, placid, affectionate creature, who thought of nothing but my refreshment and comfort, — who had my slippers airing for me at the fender, and some nice little supper, often of her own cookery, just ready to be served up! Although I had now an income, it was but a small, a very small one, and the few hundred pounds which Joanne possessed had been almost all sunk in the house

and its furniture ; so that we had enough to live, but nothing to throw away ; — of course, then, it was proper for us to live in a very retired manner, and we did so. The solitude, however, was all hers. I was out all day, busy, occupied, seeing a variety of people ; she was at home, and almost always alone, working or reading in her window, or attending to the flowers in her garden. There could not be a more solitary, or a more unvaried tenor of life ; yet how far was she from any thing like wearying of it, or repining ! I never found her, when I came home, but with the same sweet, contented smile upon her face, — always the same quiet cheerfulness, — the same gentle, reposing tenderness ; — every look, every gesture, said plainer than words, “ You are my husband — I am happy ! ”

On Sunday evenings, whenever I was not particularly engaged with some patient, we used to take a stroll together up the river, and drink tea with Mammy. The old woman received us with looks of pride and joy, called us her “ ain dear bairns,” and declared she could now die happy.

In the meantime, I was not only constantly employed in the exercise of my calling, but making rapid and sensible progress in professional skill. I was fortunate enough to effect cures, that excited considerable remark all over the neighbourhood, in several cases with which my principal, Ronaldson, had had no concern ; and began to be called in by not a few respectable families, which had never, at any period, employed him as their medical adviser. I also invented, about this time, the catheter that still bears my name ; and its ingenuity and usefulness were remarked upon in terms of decided approbation, (I assure you, I was not the writer myself,) in the most authoritative Medical Journal then published in Edinburgh. A man had poisoned his wife in the country, and I being summoned, among the rest of the provincial practitioners, to give my opinion on the circumstances of the case before the Circuit Court of Justiciary at his trial, happened, as it was generally thought, to throw more

light on the questionable points than any other doctor who gave evidence before or after me, and was warmly commended accordingly from the bench.

These, and some other little occurrences of the same order, began to produce their usual effects on poor human nature. In a word, my vanity was touched; and it appeared to me, that, when the twelvemonth's agreement should expire, I ought to look forward to a more liberal share of the profits of a concern of which I now regarded myself as the most efficient support, and with the drudgery of which old Ronaldson had certainly, ever since he admitted me into the partnership, given himself extremely little annoyance.

About this time, just when my intoxication was in tolerably rapid progress, the Marquis of N——, and his family, happened, after an absence of several years on the Continent, to come home, and take possession of one of their seats, which lies about fifteen miles up the river from Maldoun. We had no patients so far off in that particular direction, so that this arrival did not at first excite any interest in my mind; but they had not been a fortnight in the country ere I was sent for — *I* — not Ronaldson & Waldie — but *I*, Doctor Waldie, to visit the Marchioness, who had had an overturn from her garden-chair, and fractured an arm.

I, of course, obeyed the summons with great readiness; and had the good fortune to perfect her ladyship's cure, in the course of a few weeks, in a style that gave entire satisfaction. Having slept many nights in the house in the course of my cure, I found myself regarded by all the family, but especially by my patient, in somewhat the light of a friend, ere my attendance came to be dispensed with; and, on taking my leave, I received a pressing invitation to revisit N—— House, whenever I happened to be near its domain.

The fee which followed the completion of this job was, out of all sight, the handsomest that I had happened to meet with; and you may believe, that in my then somewhat dissatisfied mood, it was with feelings of not the

most entire acquiescence that I saw nine guineas booked to Mr Ronaldson, while *one* was all that, according to the terms of our contract, fell to the share of him who alone had earned the whole of this splendid honorarium. I took occasion to hint something of my notions to my friend Dr Dalrymple not long afterwards; and the worthy man, generous in the extreme himself, expressed, unfortunately for me, a strong sense of the hard situation in which I seemed to be placed, labouring for an old bachelor's behoof, who had no near kindred that he knew of, to come after him, while I, with a young wife, and the probability of a family, was earning, by the labour of my life, nothing but a bare subsistence. The Doctor had, as I have hinted formerly, some private rights, of which I at this time knew nothing, to speak something of his mind on this subject to Mr Ronaldson; and he did so; and the crusty old lad took his interference in so much dudgeon, that from that day I found myself very uncomfortably situated in my intercourse with my partner. To say truth, I believe the message from N — House, with its consequences, had rankled deep in his bosom, and he was not sorry to have a pretence given him for shewing something of his sulkiness, without incurring the open blame of aggression.

His sulkiness, however, when he did shew it, was what my temper was by no means likely to endure. One or two skirmishes paved the way for a serious bout of angry discussion. I spoke little, to be sure, compared with my old gentleman; but what I did say, was said with quite enough of bitterness. He, on the other hand, reproached me openly with ingratitude, and even went so far as to drop a hint that I had introduced myself to him originally with the settled purpose of embracing the first favourable opportunity to supplant him in the affections of his customers, and then cut the connection. This was intolerable. I was rash enough to tell him, that had he fewer white hairs on his scalp, I would have drubbed him where he stood. He absolutely foamed with rage, and I left his room — never to enter it again. Our articles

were cancelled instantly, although their term had yet a good many weeks to run.

This rupture excited, of course, considerable interest in so small a community. Ronaldson was old and rich, and he was, besides these merits, a member of the Whist Club, which met regularly every night in the year, Sundays excepted, at the principal public-house of the town; and the members of this fraternity, including an old half-pay captain or two, the chief quidnuncs of the place — together with *the* brewer, who was also *the* provost, and two shopkeepers, who had, time out of mind, officiated as the bailies, and a palsied slave-driver, from Barbadoes, who, by annual presents of coffee and ratafie, contrived to make both the male and the female magnates of Maldoun overlook all the questionables of his many-coloured establishment — and *the* writer, for, wonderful to be told, there was but one — all these worthies began, with one accord, to wag their tongues against me, with cautious virulence, in every corner where I had no means of being heard in my turn; while the other doctor, who had, half his lifetime, done nothing but turn up his nose at Mr Ronaldson, now acted a truly Christian part, and upheld his old rival, tooth and nail, or rather, to speak more correctly, shrug and snuffle. The minister, on the other hand, who considered the Whist Club as an abomination, and his wife, who had been much edified with Joanne's strict attendance at church — as also the elders of the kirk, who lived in a state of perpetual hostilities with the municipal body, in consequence of various disputable points of management, and particularly some conflicting claims touching the superintendence of charitable expenditure; these, and moreover the midwife, who, *cæteris paribus*, was in the habit of preferring a young married man to an old bachelor, with the old exciseman, whose head I had mended after a scuffle with the smugglers, and several young townsmen, to whom I had been useful on private occasions, and the milliner, who made my wife's wedding-clothes — all, and each of these, openly espoused my side in the controversy. No

wonder that the contest was a hot one ; and almost as little, I take it, that I had the worst of it, so far as the noble city of Maldoun was concerned.

In truth, I soon gave up all thoughts of the town ; and even from the country I neither got nor expected much for some time ; for I was scrupulous in revisiting none of my patients there, until the dissolution of our partnership had been announced publicly, and Mr Ronaldson had had every opportunity of re-cementing his interrupted acquaintance with the different families whom he had formerly attended.

The consequence was, that the old gentleman took a ride round the country, in company with his ancient antagonist, with whom (he now mentioned) he had formed a partnership, in consequence of that disagreeable temper, and unhandsome behaviour, which had rendered it impossible for him to avail himself in future of my services. Having thus fairly introduced Mr Mackay, Ronaldson left him to contest the rural practice with me, it having been arranged that the senior partner of the new firm should confine his exertions to the town, as he had of late been wont to do ; an arrangement which, in point of fact, the state of his health and strength rendered the reverse of optional.

Certain awkward feelings of my own kept me back almost as much as the zeal of this new alliance ; but by degrees many of my friends of the glens deserted the practitioner, (assuredly he was no great witch,) who had thus been, in a manner, forced upon them ; and by the end of that summer I was in possession of a free and independent business, less extensive, indeed, but much better paid than that which I had quitted.

During all this time of trouble and vexation, nothing could exceed the composure and sweetness of temper with which my poor Joanne submitted to every thing that happened. Her calm, hopeful, confiding spirit, had a thousand times more real heroism about it, than my cold pride and stubborn scorn could ever equal. The only thing that I took better than she, was a tolerably clever

lampoon, in the shape of a song, the production of the schoolmaster. This effusion, in which I was very scurvily treated, was communicated to her ears by the wife of our clergyman ; and Joanne told me of it when I came home, with tears of sorrow and indignation in her eye. I saw that the notion of my being made a laughing-stock had almost broken her heart ; but I sung it over to her myself next day, and my gaiety not only restored her to her equanimity, but robbed the satire, such as it was, of its sting elsewhere. *Spreta exolescunt.*

CHAPTER XX.

It was just when I was maintaining this battle with worldly difficulties that the itinerant Methodists of England first made their appearance in our part of the country.

My wife had heard these preachers once or twice, and as it appeared to me that she came home rather low-spirited, I endeavoured to discourage her from going near them again ; but she excited my own curiosity by the terms in which she spoke of the eloquence of the person she had listened to ; and one evening, when Mr Whitefield next came to Maldoun, I determined to accompany her, being desirous of judging for myself as to the man's powers of declamation, and also willing to have something in the shape of distinct knowledge in my possession, in case I should afterwards see fit to oppose Joanne more seriously in her zeal for an entertainment, (such only I considered it,) the tendency of which I strongly suspected to be somewhat dangerous. We repaired together, accordingly, to the church-yard one fine summer's evening, and taking our seat on a tombstone, awaited, amidst a multitude, such as I should not have supposed the whole of our valley could have furnished, the forthcoming of the far-famed orator.

And an orator indeed he was. I need not describe

him, since you must have read many better descriptions than I could frame ; but I will say what I believe, and that is, that Whitefield was, *as an orator*, out of all sight superior to any thing my time, or yours either, has witnessed. The fervour, the passion, the storm of enthusiasm, spoke in every awful, yet melodious vibration of by far the finest human voice I have ever heard. Every note reverberated, clear as a silver trumpet, in the stillness of the evening atmosphere. A glorious sun, slowly descending in a sultry sky, threw a gleam of ethereal crimson over the man and the scene. The immense multitude sat, silent as the dead below them, while the hand of a consummate genius swept, as with the mastery of inspiration, every chord of passion. My poor girl sat beside me, her eyes filled sometimes to the brink of tears, with that deep, dreamy, lovely melancholy, which so often bespeaks, in woman's gaze, the habit of preferring the romance of earthly things to their truth — and which reveals also her natural disposition to sigh for an unknown something, better than even the most exquisite of earthly romances can supply : but Joanne's look expressed frequently — as I observed with sorrow and anxiety, in spite of the interest and emotion created for the moment within my own bosom — not that gentle sadness merely, but a dark and almost despairing gloom. I said to myself, as I drew her arm within mine to go home, This man is a prince of orators, but my wife shall hear him no more.

I said what I thought most likely to turn Joanne's thoughts the same night ; but although she did not enter into any argument with me, I perceived that all I said was useless. There are some points on which it is in vain to fight with a woman ; and religion, or any thing that takes the name of religion, is among them. If I had been an idle man, and always at home, perhaps it might have been otherwise ; but I soon suspected that Joanne's long and solitary days must require, now that the first brilliant bloom of things was gone by, some occupation, or some diversion, to relieve their natural

tedium, and acquiesced, or seemed at least to do so, in what I saw it would be very difficult to resist—and what, it also occurred to me, might, if resisted and defeated, make room for something even less desirable. Joanne's new fancies interfered, at all events, with none of the great duties she had to perform; and I found my home such as it had wont to be, and my welcome too. I often said to myself, Well, 'tis much better thus, than if my wife had taken to the paltry gaieties which occupy so many of her neighbours in the same sphere of life. Nor was there ever any time when I did not say to myself, that her extreme was at least better than the other one of utter thoughtlessness and worldly-mindedness: (one of their own words, I believe, but no matter.) Still, however, it is not to be denied, that from the time when Joanne became decidedly tinged with this enthusiasm, I did harbour a constant feeling that she had ceased to be all mine—only mine. Distrusting my own temper, I soon gave up entirely conversing with her on the topics of dispute. But occasional lapses would always, under such circumstances, take place; and I sometimes almost suspected, even when we were farthest from disputation, that she doubted whether her love for one so averse as I was from her own views of these things, were not, in some sort, a weakness that she ought to struggle against. Modest, gentle creature, I believe I on some occasions almost loved her the better for this.

I take much shame to myself, however, in confessing, that ere long I allowed my wife's ultra-serious mood, and the impossibility which I had found or imagined of dispersing it, to act on my own mind as a sort of excuse for following occasionally a course of life even less domestic than my professional engagements rendered absolutely necessary. When, by some extra exertion, I might have reached home early, I sometimes suffered myself to be persuaded, that there was no great harm if I stayed where I happened to be; and, being in high health, and successful in my business, I was, on the

whole, possessed of a flow of spirits at this time that made my company acceptable among the rural lairds, of whose hospitality I thus partook. I rode a good horse, too, and was never indisposed, when I could spare the time, for a coursing match; nay, I occasionally went to see the fox-hounds throw off, and was tempted to go on. This last, to be sure, was far from being a piece of mere imprudence; since many were the broken heads that I was called on to patch, to say nothing of a collar-bone to set now and then. In short, both I and my horse were well known in the field, and my lancet-case has sometimes furnished the means of absecting a brush. They called me the Game Doctor in the county club, with whom I had frequently the honour of dining.

My wife took this with her usual temper. It sometimes cut me to the heart, when I saw her come down in her bed-gown to let me in at three or four o'clock in the morning. Once—indeed, only once—I was brought home entirely drunk, and hurt a good deal about the head also, in consequence of some squabble which had taken place between the party I dined with and a troop of smugglers, who happened not to have the *tact* to be on good terms with our host, a leading Justice of the Peace in the county. This gave great affliction to poor Joanne; and, I confess, she said some things next day that vexed me a good deal. I knew I had been all in the wrong; but my head had been cut, and my body was all over bruises, and I was in a bad condition for a lecture, even a curtain one, and from the most affectionate of wives.

But you can easily imagine all this sort of thing. Let me get on with my story.

My wife was sincerely afflicted about this time by the news of the death of her brother, my late pupil, who was drowned in the Thames, near Eton, while bathing with some of his companions. Joanne had been tenderly attached to Claud, although I can scarcely say so much in regard to the young ladies of that family; and I also was not without my feelings on this occasion, for, in

truth, the little baronet had always appeared, while under my tuition, a most amiable and promising boy. This event was announced to us in a very formal manner from the Lady Juliana; and we soon afterwards heard that Matilda, now a great heiress, was on the eve of being married to a young captain of the Guards, who had the honour to be nearly connected with her mother's family.

I believe both of us would have mourned much more deeply for the youthful Sir Claud, had not other events followed rapidly to distract and occupy all our thoughts. Poor Mammy Baird was struck with the palsy in the course of the same month, and you may be sure my wife and I were in constant attendance at her bed-side, from the moment in which this calamity reached us.

At first, the old woman's mind seemed to be almost entirely gone. She sometimes spoke to us by our own names, but much more frequently addressed herself to me, as if I had been the late Sir Claud Barr, and Joanne her unfortunate mother.

"Marry her, Sir Claud; marry her out of hand," she cried once, when we were standing together before her. "Ye think I'm sleeping, but I see and hear very weel a' that ye're saying. Marry the bonny lassie, young man. I'm sure it's true she says, that ye promised that; and if ye break your word, Claud Barr, ye'll maybe find, when ye're an auld dying body like me, that happier are the hands compassed with irons, than the heart wi' thoughts——"

The dream floated away; and, in a few minutes afterwards, she would be quite self-possessed again, apparently unconscious of every thing that she had been saying.

Mammy survived the shock several days. The evening on which she died she had been particularly self-possessed, and, among other things, given full directions as to her own funeral. She also desired her cousin, who lived with her, to fetch her bunch of keys, and pointed out one which she told Joanne belonged of right to nobody but her. — "It's the key of the green trunk," said Mammy; "and baith trunk and key should have been sent hame

wi' you when you were married, but I thought, just then, the sight of some of the things might be a pain to you. Ye'll find a' your mother's bit odds and ends there. I gathered them together when we were to leave the Mains."

Mammy, when she found her end to be close at hand, desired the women that were about her to open a particular drawer, and give her the first thing they should see in it. It was a shroud, which she had many years before prepared with her own hands. They gave it her, and, after it was put on, she requested that I should be readmitted.

I found her lying in the garment of death, with a stern serenity upon her brow.

"Now kiss me," said she, "one and all of you, for I cannot raise my head again."

When we had done this, Mammy said, in a distinct and audible voice, — "Leave me now, bairns, — leave me, all of you; for I've a lang journey before me, and I would fain set off by my lane. — Leave me, and may God bless you all!"

I drew Joanne away, for I understood Mammy's eye. We all withdrew, and watched for a while in the next room. At last the cousin stole in, and came back to us immediately to say that our friend was no more. She was, indeed, our friend. Joanne closed her eyes with reverential fingers; and the second head that I laid in the grave was Mammy's.

CHAPTER XXI.

A DAY or two after poor Mammy's burial, the little green trunk, of which she had spoken, was conveyed to our house at Maldoun; and I took an opportunity of looking over its contents by myself, lest perhaps my wife should meet with something that might unnecessarily give her pain.

I recognized the moth-eaten dress of dark satin, and the bundle of old yellow lace, which my departed friend had shewn me long before in the forbidden chamber at Barr-mains ; and a variety of little female ornaments, and shreds and patches of embroidery, lay beside them. Two caskets, one much smaller than the other, were at the bottom of all ; and, after searching in vain for their keys, I proceeded to break them both open. In the smaller one I found two miniatures ; the one representing evidently the same beautiful form which I had admired in the portrait of the garret, the other Sir Claud Barr in his youth, — totally unlike, certainly, my recollection of its original, but so much the same with a picture of him in the dining-room, that I knew very well for whom it was meant. These I restored to their case for the present, intending to have them put into larger frames, and hung in my wife's bed-room.

The larger casket, when I forced its lid, presented to my view a packet sealed with three seals in black wax, but nothing written on its envelope. I broke the seals, and found that the contents were letters ; the letters, in short, which had passed between Sir Claud Barr and his lovely Fleming previous to their elopement. My first thought was to destroy them immediately ; but, glancing my eye over one, I was so much struck with the natural and touching elegance of the language, that I could not resist the inclination which rose within me, and fairly sat down to peruse the whole at my leisure.

They were all in French ; and most interesting as well as curious productions certainly they were. I have never read many genuine love-letters, and I doubt very much whether most of them would reward a third person for the trouble of reading them. But here — I speak of the poor girl's epistles — there was such an openness of heart, such a free, infantine simplicity of expression, such a pride of passion, that I knew not whether my admiration and pity, or my scorn and indignation, were uppermost. One letter, written just before the elopement, was a thing the like of which I have never seen, — I had never even

imagined. Such lamentation, such reproaches, mingled with such floods of tenderness, such intense yet remorseful lingering over an intoxication of terror, joy, pride, and tears! Men, after all, probably know but little of what passes in the secret heart of woman; and how little does woman dare to say, far less to write, that might illuminate them! But here was the heart of a woman, beating, and burning, and trembling, beneath the bosom of an artless child. No concealment—none whatever;—the victim glorying in the sacrifice in the same breath with which she deplored herself!—How much the meanest and the basest of all selfishness is man's!

The deceiver's letters were written in bad French comparatively speaking, and altogether bore the impress of a totally inferior mind; yet some of them were not without their bursts of eloquence too. At the beginning, said I to myself, this man meant not to betray her. I read a long letter through; and found, after a world of verbiage, one line that startled me,—"Oui, mon ange, oui, je vous le jure; VOUS SEREZ, VOUS ETES, MON EPOUSE."

I knew enough of the law of my country, to be aware of the extreme danger to which the use of expressions of this sort had often led; and I could not help passing a sleepless night, revolving a thousand fancies, the most remote shadow of which had never before suggested itself to me. Joanne observed how restless I was, but I resolved not to give her the annoyance of partaking in an agitation which might, I was sufficiently aware, terminate in absolutely nothing. So I kept my thoughts to myself for the present, but spent a great part of next day in conning over the section *Marriage*, in half a dozen different law-books, which I contrived to borrow among my neighbours. Still I found myself entirely in the dark. I could make no clear sense out of all the conflicting authorities I saw quoted and requoted, concerning *consensus de futuro*, *consensus de præsentì*, *copulæ subsequentes*, consent *rebus ipsis et factis*, promises *in æstu datæ*, and I know not how much more similar jargon.

I recollected, that one of the Judges of the Court of

Session, with whom I had met sometimes at the county club, had just come home to his seat in our neighbourhood, and resolved to communicate my scruples to him, rather than to any of the pettifoggers in the country. Accordingly, I mounted my horse, and arrived about noon, with all my papers in my pocket, at that beautiful villa from which the Lord Thirleton took his title of courtesy.

I found his lordship sitting on the turfen fence of one of his belts of fir, in his usual rural costume of a scratch-wig, a green jacket, Shetland hose, and short black gaiters. A small instrument, ingeniously devised for serving at once as a walking cane, a hoe, and a weed-grubber, rested against his knee; and, while reposing a little to recruit his wind, he was indulging himself with a quiet perusal of a "condescendence and answers," which he had brought with him in his pocket.

I waited till, having finished a paragraph, he lifted his eyes from his paper; and then, with as little periphrasis as I could, introduced to him myself and my errand.

"Love-letters, lad?" said he, rubbing his hands; "let's see them, let's see them. I like a love-letter from my heart, man — what signifies speaking — *semel insanivimus omnes*."

I picked out the two letters which, I thought, contained the cream of the matter, and watched his face very diligently while he read them.

"Od, man," says he, "but that lassie writes weel. I cannot say that I make every word of the lingo out, but I see the drift. — Puir thing! she's been a bit awmorous young body."

"The point, my lord," said I, "is to know what the Court would think of that passage?" — (I pointed out the line of Sir Claud's penmanship, which I have already quoted) — "You are aware how they lived together afterwards. What, if I may ask, is the law of Scotland as to such matters?"

"Hooly, hooly," quoth the Judge; "let me gang ower this again. — Troth, they're queer words these."

"My dear Lord," said I, "I want to know what the Court would be likely to say to them."

His lordship took off his spectacles, and restoring them to their case, rose, hoe in hand, from his seat — "My dear Doctor," quoth he, laying his hand on my shoulder, "it really surprises me to see how little the people of this country ken about the affairs that maist nearly concern them."

"True, my lord," said I; "I am very sensible that I am no lawyer. But it is our greatest happiness that we have among us learned persons who are able to instruct us in these matters when we have occasion.—Your lordship can easily inform me what the law of Scotland ——"

"The law of Scotland!" cried he, interrupting me: "the law of Scotland, Doctor Waldie! Gude faith, my worthy friend, it's eneugh to gar a horse laugh to hear you—The law o' Scotland! I wonder ye're no speaking about the crown o' Scotland too; for I'm sure ye might as weel speir after the ane frae the Bullers o' Buchan, as the other frae their Woolsacks. They might hae gaen on lang eneugh for me, if they had been content wi' their auld impruvements o' ca'ing a flae a flea, and a puinding a poinding—but now, tapsal-teirie's the word—But wheesht, wheesht,—we maun e'en keep a calm sough, my lad."

"I am afraid," said I, "your lordship conceives the law to be very unsettled, then, as to these matters?"

"The law *was* settled enough, Doctor Waldie," he replied; "but what signifies speaking? I suppose, ere long, we shall be Englified, shoulder and croupe. Isna that a grand law, my man, that let's folk blaw for forty years about the matter of forty merks, if they will, and yet tries a puir devil for his life, and hangs him within the three days, ay, and that without giving him leave to have ony body to speak a word for him, either to Judgo or Jury?—My word, they might learn to look nearer hame."

His lordship was thumping away at the turf with his

hoe all this while, and seemed to be taking things in general so hotly, that I despaired of getting him to fix his attention on my particular concern ; and said, the moment he paused, " Well, my lord, I suppose the short and the long of it is, that you think there would be no use in my trying this question."

" Hooly, hooly, there again," quoth he, quite in his usual tone — " It's not ae stroke that fells the oak, and while there's life there's hope, young man. Do you really think that I'm sic a ramstam gowk, as to bid you or ony man fling the cloak away ere you've tried how it will clout. Na, na, hooly and fairly, my dear Doctor."

" Then your lordship inclines to think favourably ——"

" Me incline to think favourably, young man ! — tak' tent what you're saying. Do you think that I'm gaun to incline to think either favourably or unfavourably here, on my ain dykeside, of a case that I may be called upon, in the course of nature, to decide on, saul and conscience, in the Parliament-house mony days hence ? Ye should really tak' better care what you say — young calves are aye for being at the end of their tether."

" Oh, my lord ; I'm sure your lordship can't imagine that I could have had the least intention of forming any opinion derogatory to your lordship's well-known impartial character. Really, really, you have quite mistaken me. I only meant to ask you as a friend, if I may presume to use such a word with your lordship, whether you thought I should, or should not, encounter the risk of a lawsuit as to this matter."

" That's no a thing for me to speak about, my good friend ; it's my business to decide law-pleas when they're at their hinder-end, not when they're at the off-setting. Ye must advise wi' counsel."

A sudden light flashed upon me at this moment ; I bowed respectfully to his lordship, and, without informing him of my intention, went round by the other side of the firs to his mansion-house. Here I inquired whether the young laird was at home, and was told that he was out shooting partridges, in a turnip-field not far

off. I desired that he might be sent for, and the young gentleman obeyed forthwith.

By the time he joined me, I had sealed up five guineas, under a sheet of paper, and superscribed it "For Michael Thirler, younger of Thirleton, Esq. Advocate." I placed this in his hand, and found that I had at least secured a most patient and attentive, if not a very intelligent listener. In a word, I saw plainly enough, that the young advocate, thus suddenly taken, was no more able to give me an opinion, touching the law of marriage, than to cut a man for the stone — but this did not discourage me. I left my papers with him, saying, that the chief favour he could confer on me, would be to weigh the matter with the utmost deliberation ere he said one word about it; and adding, that I should have the honour of calling on him next day about the same hour, if he had no objections. I saw how much this arrangement delighted him, and departed in full confidence that I should soon get value for my gold.

Accordingly, when I returned next day, I received from the hands of my young counsellor, a long, formal, and masterly opinion, in which every disputable point of the case was gone into fully, and which concluded with a clear and distinct recommendation of my projected action.

The old lord came into the room, while I was conning it over, and, stepping up to my ear, whispered, "Ay, ay, ye ken there's an auld saying, Young lawyers and auld doctors—and maybe half of it may be true." I nodded in answer to his friendly gesture, and received a cordial invitation to stay and try "whether a pair paper-lord might not hae a drap of tolerable Bourdeaux in his aught." This temptation, however, you may suppose I for once resisted. It was now high time that my wife should be informed of an affair that so nearly interested her.

Poor soul! she heard me to an end without speaking; took the lawyer's opinion into her hand, and read it once more over; and then threw herself, weeping aloud, upon my bosom. — "I am not a base-born girl," she cried;

"you will, after all, have no reason to be ashamed of your wife!" "Tears," says the proverb, "may be sweeter than manna."—Surely these were such.

CHAPTER XXII.

LAW-SUITS, John, are like the conversations of lovers, not very amusing to those not immediately concerned in them. I shall therefore spare you the voluminous history of the action of declarator of marriage, *Barr v. Barr*; and content myself with merely mentioning in general, that, after a prodigious variety of private letters and public pleadings had been interchanged, the lawyers on both sides were satisfied that the point was one of the extremest doubt and difficulty, and mutually recommended to their clients the settling of the dispute, if possible, by some compromise out of doors. My temper was sanguine; and the "savage virtue of the chase," as the poet calls it, was by this time in full excitement within me, so I treated at first this proposition with great coldness. But when I found that I really had it in my power to establish immediately the legitimacy of my wife's birth, (a thing much nearer her heart, I believed then, and I believe now, than any thing besides,) and to enter the same moment into possession of one half of the estate of Barrmains—while, if I persisted in my litigation, there was at least a very considerable chance of our failing entirely, both in regard to the honour we were seeking, and the wealth consequent upon it;—I could not, I say, calmly balance these accounts, without perceiving that Joanne's dearest interests required me to accept of the offered compromise. The delight with which she heard me say that I was willing to act in this manner, (for she would never give her advice,) was more than I could describe; the arrangements were soon perfected; we were allowed to carry through our declarator without farther opposition; and the estate was divided

between the sisters, according to the judgment of three impartial private individuals — Barrmains house falling to the share of Joanne, as the elder of the two.

Here, then, was a reverse of fortune with a witness.

So long as the affair was of doubtful termination, I had resolutely stuck by the exercise of my profession, and we had, in no respect whatever, altered our mode of life at Maldoun. The change in our circumstances, therefore, was every way as sudden as complete.

We soon took possession of Barrmains, and found ourselves involved in all the tumults of rural congratulation. For several weeks we were never a day alone. Cousins remembered, half remembered, and before unheard of, arrived in troops, to claim Joanne's kindred ; and I, my own name and family being of course well known by this time, was embraced, upon terms of perfect equality, to say the least of it, by all those provincial dons, who had previously admitted me to their society on a somewhat different foot, and also by many with whom I had previously maintained no intercourse whatever. Joanne, the overlooked, the forgotten Joanne, was hailed as the ornament of the county. Barrmains resounded with the bustle of eternal festivity.

Another month was mostly spent in returning the visits of the gentry who had thus honoured us. By this time the winter was setting in, and we retired to Barrmains, rather wearied of the life we had been leading, and desirous of a little domestic quiet. We had arrangements to make concerning farms and tenants ; we had also to consider, more carefully than could have been expected at the first, what our establishment ought to be ; and I, for myself, began to feel that I ought to provide some plan of useful occupation for a part of my time. For, accustomed as I had been to activity, a very few weeks had been quite sufficient to give me some glimpses of the danger of ennui. My neighbours were, many of them, excellent fellows ; and in a hunting-field, or over a bottle, I found their company sufficiently palatable ; but there was not among them any one with

whom I either was, or thought it likely I should ever be, very particularly intimate. They were squires; and I was one too; but I felt that I was not thoroughly so. I was a young man, it is true, but I had lived long enough, and in ways sufficiently diversified, to give me a feeling that the habits of my mind were fixed.

Was I happy, then, with this splendid residence, this liberal, if not splendid fortune, and this amiable wife?—Surely, if I answer with the least hesitation, you will pronounce the failure to have been the consequence of nothing but some wayward and capricious movement of my own temper.

Listen, however, a little more patiently, ere you altogether condemn me.

My firm expectation, I confess, had been, that my wife, when removed into a sphere of life more diversified with the intercourses of society, and, moreover, necessarily bringing with it the obligation of many in themselves beneficent duties, and lastly, (not in my imagination, certainly, leastly,) enabling me to be much more her companion than my business as a medical man had hitherto permitted me to be,—I expected assuredly, that, placed under these novel and favourable circumstances, Joanne would soon shake off that tinge of religious melancholy which had, ever since the Methodist preacher visited our district, haunted her gentle spirit, and of which I had always supposed the retired, and, indeed, solitary habits of our life of poverty, to have been the chief fostering influence. The ease with which Joanne mingled in the society that our new fortunes at first drew around us, persuaded me still farther that this hope would not eventually be disappointed; and I abstained from saying any thing on the subject, in the belief that circumstances must always, in such cases, be more powerful agents than words,—above all, than any such words as, I conceived, were likely to come from me, in relation to matters of which I understood but little, and with which I confess myself to have had no sympathy worth the mentioning.

How grievously was I disappointed as to all this!

These people were nothing slower than others in paying court, after their own fashion, to the new Lady of Barrmains. With daily increasing uneasiness, I perceived what progress their most artful of all flatteries was enabling them to make in the establishment of their influence over this not less timid than gentle disposition. But what could I do; unless, indeed, I had resolved at once to commence a totally new system, and introduce regular controversy to my fire-side? Was not she the real owner of all this new wealth? Was not this, in truth, her table, her roof, her every thing? How refuse to receive guests whom she chose to welcome; how object to any expenditure in which she chose to indulge? My tongue was fettered as to all this. I sat silent, while men, whose conversation I despised, seemed to consider themselves at home, beneath the roof of one whom they styled their sister. I sat silent, while day after day, and week after week, still brought with it some new manifestation of the same growing mania. I saw my wife's name blazoned, in a hundred tracts and pamphlets, as the patroness of institutions, the professed intention of which neither I nor any body could deny to be good and fair, while the names of those at the head of them inspired me with perpetual distrust, and aversion, and contempt.

That period was one in which this endemic raged far and near in our county, to an extent of which your own experience can have furnished you with no notion. The eternal visitations of wandering fanatics, some of them men of strong talents, and respectable acquirements, the far greater part ignorant, uninformed, wild, raving mechanics, — the enormous assemblages of people which the harangues of these persons never failed to command, even in the wildest and most thinly peopled districts of the country, — the scenes of, literally speaking, mere madness, which their enthusiastic and often impious declamations excited, and in which even the most eminent of them condescended to triumph, as the sure tests of the divinity of the peculiar dogmas which they enun-

ciated,—these, and the subscriptions for schools, chapels, and I know not what—all to be under the control of the apostles of this perilous sect,—all these things spread and flourished in a style of which you can happily form but a slender conception.

Whatever circumstances might have originally favoured the growth of this mania in England, I am sure there were none in Scotland that could be drawn into any semblance of apology or palliative. Our people were then, as they are now, well taught, well disposed, devout by habit, and superintended by a simple, zealous, and most laborious priesthood of their own. Yet men, and churchmen too, were not wanting to lend countenance and encouragement to these wild itinerants even there; and if I had entered into any serious arguments with my wife, I am ashamed to acknowledge that she might have cited against me names, so universally, and, indeed, so deservedly venerable, that it must have been no easy matter to convince her, no very pleasant matter even to insinuate, that they were all in the wrong.

Almost by way of *dernier resort* I was meditating a journey to Edinburgh, where I hoped crowds, and bustle, and total novelty, might produce some favourable effect in Joanne's mind, when a new field of interest and occupation was suddenly and unexpectedly opened upon myself. In a word, the Marquis of N—— called one day at Barrmains, and, requesting a private conversation, informed me that his second son, Lord James, (the same who was afterwards Admiral,) had just received his appointment to the command of a frigate, which was likely to be kept, for several years to come, on the Spanish Main — that this rendered it desirable for his lordship to vacate his seat in Parliament for the present — and that he, the Marquis, had, upon considering the state of feeling in the country, taken it into his head that I was exactly the man who ought to start for the boroughs. His lordship knew my politics too well to be under any apprehension on that score; and he therefore said, with perfect safety, a great many pretty things, the meaning

of which I thoroughly understood, about the perfect independence, &c. &c. &c. with which I should, if successful in the canvass he proposed, come into Parliament.

All this was so new, so totally new, that at first I felt somewhat puzzled; but I was not to give my answer until the next day, and, ere that hour came, I had easily satisfied myself, that a scheme which flattered my vanity, was also, under all the circumstances, the very best and wisest which I could follow. Public business would come to occupy a mind which dreaded stagnation; and I should carry my wife with me to London, which would be fifty times better for the purpose I had had in view, than the now merely nominal capital of Scotland.

Our operations, therefore, (I may say *our*, for they were at least as much Lord N——'s as mine,) were commenced without delay, after the most approved fashion of all such commencements. That is to say, a clever agent arrived from Edinburgh, and made a tour through the two towns and three villages whose representation was vacant, where he cultivated, very assiduously, Provost, Dean of Guild, Bailie, and Counsellor, preparing the way before the candidate, whose own visitations were shortly to follow. It is not necessary for me to say any thing about what the writer did:—my own personal part was an easier, probably, and a more simple one. I gave dinners and dinner-like suppers to the notables of the several places, made speeches that shook the very walls, sung songs that made periwigs fly, and drank any thing drinkable, from claret to whisky, until my eyes and nose began to look as if I myself had been for years a leading member of some independent municipal corporation. I played whist with the lady-bailies, and lost every rubber; danced with their daughters, until my wind was half-broken; slobbered the children, squeezed the hands of the chambermaids, and did every thing that becomes "a most kind, loving, kissing gentleman," (it is Cowper, I think, that so defines a parliamentary candidate.) I was opposed by an old army contractor, who, upon the peace, had joined the Opposition; but I soon

found that he had no serious intentions of contesting the point with me, being merely employed, according to a good old custom, for the purpose of making *us* feel and express, as we best might, the more gratitude for that support which we should finally experience. In a word, I was at last elected unanimously M.P. for the five eminently respectable royal burghs of Maldoun, (or, according to the more authentic spelling of their charter, Maltdown,) Cannygates, Waimiss, Weteraigs, and Cross-myloof.

Joanne was, no doubt, flattered with this new elevation: at all events, she, with much good-humour, consented to the ball and supper which I proposed giving at Barrmains to the neighbouring gentry upon the occasion. But even when the *fête* was in its fullest vigour, I had the mortification to see her retire to a corner with two or three elderly ladies, whose private propensities I well knew to be somewhat in harmony with her own; and, when standing near their knot in the pauses of the dance, I could not help hearing quite enough to satisfy me, that chalked floors, chandeliers, minuettes, and country-dances, were all alike the subjects of a sorrowful and *de-haut-en-bas* sort of contemplation.

I looked at the léan and shrivelled old creatures about Joanne, and excused them readily — but she — young, lovely, beautiful, made to live, in the true sense of the word, (“*vivre c’est sentir la vie*,”) — that she should be thus sinking before my eyes into a condition destructive of all sympathy even with *me* — this, I confess, did give me pain. I determined that these particular spinsters at least should not come into contact with her again for some time; and hastened my preparations for the journey to London with all possible zeal.

I should have mentioned that there was another very good reason for my wishing that this journey, since it was to take place, should take place soon. Joanne was now, for the first time, supposed to be in a certain interesting situation; and more especially, considering the natural delicacy of her constitution and health, it was

obvious that such a journey would be less advisable when she had made farther progress.

We were just about to take leave of Barrmains, then, without any prospect of returning to it for a considerable number of months, when I received a letter from my Lord N——, which constrained us in some measure to alter our plans. The Marquis, who was at this time at his hunting-seat in the Highlands, had heard of my intention to move southwards thus early in the season, and he was pleased to write, that he had a particular wish to see me ere I left Scotland.

When I found this to be the case, I had nothing for it but sending Joanne so far as Edinburgh by herself, there to wait until I should join her from the North ; for as to carrying her with me, her situation, and the prospect of a very long journey before her at any rate, put this quite out of the question.

Joanne, therefore, set off for Edinburgh, and I proceeded on horseback towards the Peer's forest, travelling in company with a certain old half-pay captain of marines, by name Cuthill, who had also been honoured with an invitation to spend a week there — a neighbour of ours, and an ancient hanger-on of the N—— family.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A RIDE of rather more than a hundred miles brought us to the heart of that wild and magnificent desert, where this great lord's hunting-seat, a new and elegant villa, set down in the midst of Alpine mountains, roaring torrents, and enormous old black pine woods, shewed, I think, as strangely as ever the famous tourist-chapel of Loretto could have done after any of its excursions.

Here Captain Cuthill and I found assembled a large and mirthful party, who had been for some time enjoying the splendours of the chase, in all its varieties, on his Lordship's immense domain. Fops of the first water from Pall Mall were seen seated at table, by the side

of specimens of the aboriginal "Barbarous Folk" of the district, whose attempts towards civilized coxcombry reminded one of a negro in a white neckcloth. And next day, the same fine gentlemen appeared, by the side of the same mountaineers, under circumstances of awkwardness and absurdity, which, to say the least of it, might well restore the equilibrium between them. Though not only a laird, but a member of Parliament, I, from old habit, still had my cases of instruments and medicines in my saddle-bags; and I promise you the usefulness of these appendages was not very long of being discovered. The Marquis, meanwhile, one of the best shots in Christendom trotted about the heath as if he had been in a paddock, minding nothing but his sport. Part of that, however, might have consisted in observing the sore scrapes into which some of his guests were always sure to be getting. I, for my part, was quite the Chiron of the set; my presence being as fatal to the bucks of one species, as it was beneficial to those of another.

I was well amused with all this — yet I was anxious to rejoin my wife: and, therefore, rather annoyed to find, that two or three days had passed without his lordship's honouring me with the conversation which I had been promised. He was so much surrounded with his guests, however, so early astir for the chase in the morning, and so late at his bottle in the evening, that I really could have had no opportunity of introducing the subject with much likelihood of having it satisfactorily discussed. I was awaiting my fate, therefore, with tolerable patience, when, on the third or fourth day, I overheard at his table some conversation between two gentlemen sitting opposite to me, that not a little quickened my desire to do my errand, and be gone.

"And so Lascelyne," said one, "is not to be here after all. Well, I'm sorry to hear it."

"So am I," says the other. "Lascelyne is a princely shot. I would have backed him against the field."

"Nay," was the reply, "Lord Lascelyne is a good shot, I admit; but I should never think of comparing him

with the Marquis at this sort of work. He is more your man for the pigeon-box than the moors, in my humble opinion."

"I don't know that," quoth the other; "the same coolness — that, after all, is the chief thing in both cases. Nothing can be more steady than Lascelyne. — But what's the use of talking, since he's not to come?"

"Hang it!" he answers, "one should have thought he might have been a little calmed by this time of day. I never heard of such an intoxication. — A devilish fine woman, certainly; but still ——"

"A taking creature, sir! — a world of fascination, I understand."

"Yes, yes; up to all that, I dare say. Well, he'll be here next autumn at all events."

"Ay, I think we may say so much. Do you mean to look in upon him as you go southwards?"

"I don't know whether he's at home. — Pray, my lord," says this gentleman, turning to the Marquis, "can you tell us where Lord Lascelyne is at present? Some one said, he had left that old chateau of his——"

"I don't know, really," said the Marquis; and happening to catch his eye at the moment, I could not help thinking that he spoke in a little confusion.

The conversation took another turn; and not long afterwards we joined the ladies in the drawing-room.

Lord N—— came up to me in the course of the evening, and drew me aside. — "My dear Barr," said he, (for he now generally called me by that name,) "I saw you were rather uneasy when those gentlemen talked of Lascelyne's affair so openly before you; but the truth is, you must just excuse them; they don't know any thing of your connection. I'm sure they would have been extremely sorry to say any thing they thought could hurt you, Barr."

"Nay nay," said I, "I beg your Lordship's pardon, but I really can't see that any apology of this kind is necessary. Why should I care about hearing Lord Lascelyne's name mentioned more than another's?"

"Come, come, Barr, you're close ; and perhaps, under all the circumstances, 'tis the best way."

"Close, my Lord ! I really don't understand ——"

"No matter, no matter, my good friend. I'm sure I feel very sincerely ——"

"Good Heavens ! your Lordship is vastly serious, indeed. — What is all this to me ?"

"Nay, nay, if that's the way you are taking the matter, I beg pardon, indeed. — I had heard, to be sure," he added in rather a different tone, — "I had heard of some old law-suit between you."

"A mere folly, my Lord Marquess, — a thing I have long wished to forget, I assure you."

"But you can't, that's it. Well, well, Barr, we've all of us our points. — I heartily beg pardon for having broached the disagreeable subject at all ; but, between ourselves, I was really much taken with Lady Lascelyne, and —— But I beg pardon, I see you are resolved, — no matter, no matter."

I must own, I was something disgusted with all this mumbling ; so I took the opportunity our retirement happened to have given me of leading the Peer to talk of the business I had come upon, by mentioning how anxious I was to get on to Edinburgh forthwith. He plunged immediately into the theme I had started, and held me in close confabulation for more than an hour, about a bill concerning the Scotch Fisheries, which, it was understood, Ministers meant to bring forward early in the session, and the progress of which he wished me to watch with all my attention, he himself, as it seemed, not having it in his power to be in London before spring.

As soon as I had made myself master, as I thought, of his Lordship's ideas upon this subject, I considered my affairs at the Lodge as for the present brought to a happy termination ; and, accordingly, I took my leave of the family the same evening, and began, at a very early hour next morning, my ride towards the low country.

To say truth, I had experienced a world of most disagreeable sensations during the conversation which I have just been recalling. All the faults and follies of my boyhood thus treasured up and dwelt upon, even by people whom no one could have supposed would ever have thought it worth while to waste three minutes' consideration on any private affairs of a person so totally out of their sphere. That most painful of all subjects,—that paltry, miserable law-suit to be thus remembered!—and any body that did remember it to dream of mentioning it—above all, of mentioning it to me!—And the exquisite disgust of having it supposed, that I, forsooth, could not hear Lord Lascelyne's name uttered by a stranger, in a mixed company, without suffering uneasiness sufficient to justify a formal apology from such a person as my Lord N——! The whole of this was gall to me,—and why? Why, simply, because the fact was exactly as these idle meddlers seemed to be supposing. I was conscious in my own heart, that I was not able to hear that name without feelings which I was also perfectly conscious it was the most egregious weakness in me not to have long ago banished from my bosom. I deserved, and, therefore, I felt the reproach. I felt the blood tingle in my cheek as I thought the scene over; and suspected that, after all, I had probably betrayed my emotion by some similar or equally intelligible symptom, at the moment when those coxcombs first began to prate about their bets, and their pigeon-shooting. Lord N—— had seen this. My conduct afterwards must, therefore, have seemed to him disingenuous; both awkward and unmanly!—this was much. In whatever point of view I looked at the whole affair, I found nothing to please, every thing to annoy me. Very deep feeling of any sort perhaps I had not; but I had quite enough to make my morning's ride a disagreeable one, in spite of the finest possible weather, and some of the most celebrated scenery in all the North.

CHAPTER XXIV.

EMERGING, on the second morning, from the gorge of the last pass of the Grampian chain, I perceived, in the valley before me, a small village, with a church spire in the midst of it, surrounded on every side by noble groves, bespeaking the near vicinity of some distinguished residence.

Not having been in this part of the kingdom on any former occasion, I had but a very obscure notion of its geography ; and was certainly not less pleased than surprised, when I found, on reaching the public-house, where (having come fifteen miles already) I had intended to breakfast, that the place was St Dees. You may perhaps remember my having mentioned that name some time ago ; — the very parish where my old patroness of St Andrew's had taken up her abode when she had the honour to become Mrs Mackay. I made my inquiries forthwith ; and, having ascertained that the family were at home, sent a message to say, that I would call as soon as I had breakfasted.

The honest Minister, however, was at my elbow in five minutes' space ; and, finding that my friend would think herself ill used if I broke bread at St Dees elsewhere than under her roof, I, of course, transferred myself immediately to the Manse, where, I need not say, I was received in the most cordial manner.

My old flame had thriven apparently upon matrimony, for she was now a very portly dame ; and yet four or five blooming and blushing children, with heads like buttercups, attested sufficiently, that she had not been eating the bread of idleness. In short, I found a comfortable and happy family, established in a small and snug dwelling ; and nothing could surpass, in their several species of excellence, the tea, the barley scones, the eggs, the mutton ham, the kippered salmon, and the Athole

brose of Biddy. The good people seemed to have been well aware of the fortunate change which had recently taken place in my worldly circumstances ; but, I am sure, if I had come in rags to their door, I had been welcomed every bit as warmly. I heard the whole history of them and their children, and answered a world of the most affectionate inquiries touching my own family affairs.

When we had risen from the table, the Minister threw open a door, which, half way down, bore also the character of a window, and invited us to step upon his terrace. Biddy had her bonnet on her head forthwith, and out we all went. The view was fine in the extreme ; the foreground a beautiful park, diversified with woods and plantations, through which a small stream winded, and, behind, a gentle acclivity, richly cultivated, swelling up to the base of the great hills.

I perceived at some distance from us, among the trees, the turrets and chimneys of what seemed to be a considerable mansion, and asked my worthy friends to whom the domain belonged.

" Bless me ! " says Biddy, " is it possible you need to ask such a question ? Do ye no ken that that 's Lascelyne House ? "

" None of the family are at home, " says the Minister, very hastily, eeking out Biddy's information.

A little pause took place ; during which, while apparently occupied only with the landscape, I chanced to perceive that the couple were exchanging sundry glances, pregnant with meanings to me mysterious, — and again the same painful sensations which I had so recently experienced at the Marquis's began to be in motion. I was resolved, however, that here at least I should guard myself. So I said, as indifferently as I could, " O yes, I think I heard some one say at Lord N——'s table, that Lord Lascelyne was in Edinburgh. A very fine place, indeed, it seems to be. Pray, how do you call the stream ? "

" 'Tis the Calder water, " says Biddy ; " and a bonny

water it is, if ye had time to look at the old Roman bridge, and the tway falls up the glen.' Did you never hear the auld sang, Mr Matthew ?

The birds on the bushes, the flowers thick wi' bees,
Keep the bairns blythe and heartsome at bonny St Dees ;
And the clear Calder water runs gently, gently,
Washing the roots of the old oak trees."

"Well," said I, "I am sorry to say, I must be contented with the bairns' part of your beauties for the present. I must push on immediately to Edinburgh ;"—and with this I introduced a full and particular account of my intended journey to London, &c.

"'Tis a right noble place indeed," quoth Mess John, evidently unconscious of the turn I had given the conversation ; "and, if all things else had been convenient, you might have seen both the glen and the pictures. There's a very grand collection of pictures in the castle. My Lord's grandfather had a great taste, and he spared no expense on a picture ——"

"Weel, weel, Dr Mackay," quoth Biddy, interrupting him, "I am sure ye might ken, that after all that's happened, Mr Wald would never like ——"

"Me never like ? — after all that's happened, Mrs Mackay ? Sure you're joking a little,"—said I, forcing a laugh.

"Very weel, very weel," says she smiling, but gravely ; "I ken some folk's hearts better than some folk thinks, for a' that."

"My heart ? — my dear Miss Paterson — I beg your pardon — my dear Mrs Mackay ——"

"Ay, ay, Mr Matthew, ye may laugh as meikle as ye like ; but I ken fu' weel that you're no the ane to clean forget auld friends, only for a passing tift or tway.—Yon bonny, sweet, lovely creature ?"

"Who, my dear madam, who ?"

"O dear ! O dear me ! — Weel, weel, I'se say naething."

"You've said a vast deal too much already, my dear," half whispers her spouse.

I saw Biddy give him a jog with her arm ; and again I forced in the subject of my own travels — prosing away, in a very laudable style, about natural beauties, interesting associations, and all that — but it would not do. A check had taken place : and, though we parted as affectionately as was possible, still I saw that Biddy looked upon me as having behaved with more reserve than was quite proper with so very old a friend. However, my horses being now brought to the door of the Manse, I clapt two of the children on my saddle, and walked them once or twice round the little court in her presence, — and this piece of attention was not, I thought I could see, without its effect. As for the Minister, I made him promise to come and see me at Barrmains some time, with his wife, after a General Assembly. And so adieu to this sweet scene of innocent retirement.

I rode rapidly for some time along a road, both sides of which were overshadowed by the trees of Lord Lascellyne's park, catching every now and then a little glimpse of the Mansion, as the different short, straight, dark avenues, cut through the woods, successively opened upon the palisade. I was very well aware, as I have mentioned already, that no one of the family was at home, and yet I know not what feeling of strange undefined anxiety haunted and hurried me. I started like a convict, if a stray stag, or even sheep, happened to emerge from below some of these earth-sweeping branches : — any thing moving — any thing white, was enough to shake me. I clapt the spurs to my horse, and the road being, as I have said, quite over-arched with the trees, so that scarcely any breath of air could find access to it, it was no wonder that, when — the park being apparently left behind — I slackened my pace, to enjoy the breeze on a free and open piece of rising ground, I found that my horse was already considerably blown. My groom, indeed, seemed to be himself somewhat in the same con-

dition ; and I saw that he was rather surprised with my exhibiting so little concern for my cattle, a species of inattention, certainly, with which I was far from being chargeable in general.

However, on we rode, at our moderated pace, until a turning of the road brought us close upon a spot which demanded, not merely a walk, but a halt. In a word, three different roads met very near the extremity of a small, a very small lake, on the farther bank of which, but still, as it seemed, quite close to us, (for the water was very narrow,) there appeared some fragments of an ancient Castle, and one or two cottages, propped like bee-hives against the old wall. I began calling out, in hopes of getting some one to direct us as to our road ; and presently forth came a countryman, but so deaf, or so stupid, that I was forced to dismount, and ferry myself over to his station, in a sort of punt that was lying in the water.

Upon reaching the other side, I had no difficulty in making myself understood ; and having received the information I wanted, was about to return to my horses, when the old cottager asked if I would not like to see the Castle, since I was under its walls, adding, that many people came thither for no other purpose.

“ Its name ? ” said I.

“ Lascelyne Castle, to be sure,” says he. “ This is the true Auld Place ; but the family left it after it was burnt down in Queen Mary’s days, and built in the haugh yonder.”

By this time we had climbed the stair in one of the towers still extant ; and coming out upon the battlement, I perceived that I was in reality within the park of Lascelyne House, which appeared below me at much less distance than I should have supposed — a vista among the trees terminating in one of its fronts.

“ The Castle,” I remarked, “ must form a fine feature in the view from those windows.”

“ Ay, indeed, it does that,” says my ciccone ; “ they

come often our length when they are at hame in the summer evenings. My Lady was wonderfu' fond of the auld tower."

"Where we are now?"

"Ay, here; we're on the top of the tower, ye see, sir — this is just where they used to come and take their four-hours sometimes, that summer my Lord was married — but these days are by now."

The man was silent; and not choosing to put any more leading questions, I stood beside him for a few minutes as silent as he.

"As I shall answer," cries he, "that's the new gig; weel, I had not heard my Lord was come hame."

"What! Lord Lascelyne?"

"Ay, just himsell. I ken the way he sits — ay, that's just himsell, and Madam wi' him."

"What? who? — coming this way too?"

Imagine the feelings with which I saw this vehicle drive rapidly up to the walls of the tower — Lascelyne leap from his seat — and handing down a lady. — "They'll come up stairs," said I.

"I'se warrant they're coming up," says the man; "and I maun e'en leave you, sir, for I'll maybe be wanted."

He did leave me. I paused, irresolute; I was considering whether I could not hide myself somewhere amidst the ivy; a thousand schemes and dreams hurried over my brain. I knew not what to do. Behold some one is ascending the stair — I hear once more the broken-winded pant of my cicerone and his heavy tread — Thank heaven! no other step seems to follow.

"Well," said I, when he appeared — "you are soon returned."

"Ay, sir," said he, blowing very shortly; "my Lord said he would wait till ye came down. I thought I would tell you that."

I put a trifle into the old lad's hand, and tied my handkerchief high over my chin, as I stalked down the dark and steep ascent.

To my delighted surprise, there was no one at the bottom when I reached it ; and I clambered up to a window, on the side next the water, in hopes of escaping, by choosing that egress, all farther risk of meeting with Lascelyne, who, I concluded, from what the old man said, had remained within his park. But—that every thing might be exactly as was most disagreeable for me—his Lordship had walked round the ruin, and was now standing almost immediately below me, by the brink of the lake, with his back turned, however, upon the window, at the moment when I shewed myself. I say shewed ; for although his back was towards me, not so that of his companion. Her eye was full upon me in my awkward position—but that eye was not Katharine's. I had no time to make reflections, and let myself down upon the turf. The lady took a glance or two at me through a glass which she wore suspended around her neck, and turned to Lord Lascelyne, who, however, deigned not to desist from his occupation, which was that of drawing lines on the margin with his walking cane. I hurried to my punt, and shoved off. I was in the middle of the pool ere, throwing a single glance on the shore, I perceived that Lord Lascelyne's eyes were fixed intently upon me. I could not withdraw my glance. We continued eyeing each other, but interchanged no symptoms of recognition. I almost doubted, on reaching the side, whether, after all, he had known me. Many years had passed—my dress was altogether different—nothing could have been farther from his imagination than the possibility of my being *there*. The lady—who could she be ? Beautiful she was ; boldness was in that bright eye—some haughty high-born dame—sister, or friend.

I felt as if I had been rubbing shoulders with humiliation. What could Lord Lascelyne think of me, if he really did recognize me?—what meanness in me to be visiting his pleasure-grounds, his castles—throwing myself in his way on his own domain ! And Katharine, had she happened to be with him, what must her feel-

ings have been! — how ungentlemanly, how unmanly, my behaviour! If I wished to be once more her kinsman, her friend, why not say so? — why not write to her? — why not ride up to her door like a man? — But here — to skulk about her privacy; to be wandering about her park, studying views and ruins, or gratifying some still baser curiosity! In whatever way I looked back upon the whole affair, I found pain and vexation — and I rode that day's journey more miserably, and more rapidly too, than any I could remember.

CHAPTER XXV.

NOTWITHSTANDING the mental uneasinesses of the day, the body demanded a sound nap, and enjoyed the same for, I take it, not much less than nine uninterrupted hours.

In short, I did not awake until about eight in the morning — nor am I quite sure that I should have been stirring even then, had I been left entirely to nature and myself. At all events, when I had rubbed my eyes, I became aware that some strenuous altercation was going on very near me. It was a mere cottage in which I had found my *gite*; and close to the door or the window I heard voices in disputation; one only of which (and there seemed to be at least three) I recognized — viz. that of my own man, the excellent and faithful Robin Keir: as thus: —

“Wauken, or no wauken, I maun be in — that's the short and the lang o't — Gae away, gae away, let me by.”

“The big deil's in the body! — for a' your blawin', ye'se get ne'er a fit.”

“Misca'ing the King's officer, ye flunkie?”

“I'm nae flunkie, ye ill-tongued offisher; I'm the laird's ain man, and I'm come o' better folk, too, than e'er birstled their shins at your father's peats. Ye'so get ne'er a fit farther the noo, I say.”

"Sile—e—e—ence!!!—George, by the grace of God——"

"We hear ye, body, we're no sae deaf. Ye may keep some o' your breath to cool your porridge——"

"—Of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland——Ki—i—ing!"

"Hullo!—hullo!—Tam!"

"Wheesht, wheesht, Johnnie, man—he's a bailie——"

"Of Great Britain and Ireland—King—greeting——"

"King George greeting!—eh! man, that's but bairnly."

"Diinna read a' that havers, man; just tell us what ye're wanting wi' him."

"That's liker reason, now: Has he seen my Lord yet?"

"Seen him? We're just on our gate frae his house yonder."

"They have met, then?"

"Met?—Ay, met and parted baith, to be sure: what are ye at wi' sic daft-like speirings?"

"Eh! where was the meeting, man?"

"We forgathered, the first time, on the moor, just aboon my Lord's lodgings."

"On the moors?—and they fired?"

"There was walth o' firing in that moor atweel."

"Winged?"

"Walth o' winging, man."

"Down?"

"Flat down, ye may swear—But what's a' that to you?"

"Several shots?"

"Hundreds o' shots, man."

"Guide us a'! What Heathens!—hundreds o' shots?"

"Pouter's no that dear noo, nor lead neither."

"Dead at last?"

"Dead at the very first, man."

"Dead?"

"Ay, as dead as if ye had thrawn their necks."

"Baith dead?—Ye're speaking nonsense—Barrmains is here, ye said?"

"To be sure he is."

"The body ye mean?"

"Saul and body baith — What are ye speaking about?"

"The duel to be sure."

"What duel?"

"Between your master and Lord Lascelyne."

"Lord Lascelyne! — I never heard tell o' him afore."

"Why, you've just said ye came from his place."

"Why, dear me! and sae we did; we breakfasted close beside it yesterday morning."

"A fine breakfast!"

"A capital breakfast — the very wale o' breakfasts — at the Minister's——"

"Minister's — nonsense — nonsense — what *are* you speaking about? Are they baith dead, or baith quick! — speak out at ance — Ye had better. Sile—e—nce!"

"Dead and quick? — wha dead? — wha quick?"

"Did you not say this moment that some one was dead? — Out on you, you're an old donnered——"

"Ca' canny, offisher. What is't you're driving at, wi' a' this hullybaloo?"

"Silence! I ask you, and answer me at your peril, as ye sall answer to the King and the Lord Justice-General, the Lord Justice-Clerk, and the Lords Commissioners of Justiciary——"

"Say awa', man — tak your time."

"Answer me, upon your most imminentest peril — what was the issue of the meeting between your master and the Lord Lascelyne?"

"My master and the Lord Deevil's! — They never met in this world, that I heard tell o'. We only saw the big house through the trees, as we were coming doon."

"Then whom do you mean? — Who shot? — Who fell? — Who was as dead as if his neck had been thrawn?"

"Wha's dead? The muircocks and mawkins to be sure — and a matter o' tway-three raes every day to the bargain. — Will that content you?"

"Come, come," said I, at this crisis opening my window, — "what's all this bustle, Mr Messenger?"

Robin's hat flew off in a moment ; and the fiery-faced minion of Themis, understanding who I was, shewed no want of alacrity in following the courteous example.

With many flourishes after his fashion, this personage at length informed me, that he was the bearer of a warrant of the chief criminal power in Scotland for the instant arrest of my person. You may suppose that this startled me a good deal, though I was not, by this time, without some slight gleam of suspicion as to the general nature of the mistake. I, however, put a good face upon the matter. In short, I laughed very heartily, and desired a sight of his warrant ; wherewith, after a little hesitation about trusting the paper out of his hand, he complied.

I retired a pace or two from the window, and read (you may spare me the trouble of describing with what sort of feelings) two formal documents, engrossed on one folio sheet of paper ;—the first a “petition and complaint,” from an Advocate-depute to the Judges of the Court of Justiciary, setting forth, that Matthew Wald Barr of Barrmains, alias Matthew Waldie, had, according to the sworn belief of sundry credible persons, set off for the northern part of this kingdom, with a fixed intention of provoking the Right Honourable George Lord Lascellyne to fight a duel, or to commit some grievous breach of the peace against the person of the said Lord, and to the damage of the King, his Crown, and dignity ; likeas, that the said George Lord Lascellyne was art and part in the design to fight the said duel, or otherwise to commit some grievous breach of the peace against the body of the said Matthew, &c. &c. &c. ; and praying the Court to grant warrant for the immediate arrest of the said persons, aye and until they should find caution, &c. &c. &c. to the satisfaction of the said Lords, &c. &c. The second effusion was, accordingly, the very warrant thus prayed for ; and the Judge who signed it appeared to be no other than my worthy acquaintance, the Lord Thirleton.

Exquisitely ridiculous as the whole affair appeared in one point of view, and bitterly as I was disposed to resent

it in another, I still had sense enough to perceive, that no good end could be served by my offering any sort of resistance to authority so formally embodied. Instead, therefore, of entering into any farther discussion with the messenger, I simply told him, that I saw he had done his duty ; and that, as I was going to Edinburgh at any rate, it could give me no sort of annoyance to obey the mandate of which he was the bearer.

The man was evidently quite confounded by the calmness with which I had taken the affair, and stammered out a world of such apologies and explanations, as it was more likely his imagination should suggest than my ears should listen to. One *fact*, however, he did communicate ; and this was, that although the warrant had been granted at Edinburgh, the Lord Thirleton was probably at Stirling already, or, at least, would be so in the course of the same day, for the purpose of attending the Circuit Court.

“ So much the better,” said I ; “ we shall see his Lordship thirty miles sooner than we should otherwise have been able to manage.”

In a word, I ordered breakfast immediately, and took horse with all gaiety so soon as it was over.

CHAPTER XXVI.

It was fine weather when we started ; but the day became overcast about noon, and it rained incessantly the greater part of the evening. In short, we had but an uncomfortable ride, and arrived late at night at Stirling, in a very draggle-tailed condition.

My commander led the way to the inn at which the Judges were accustomed to take up their quarters ; and I found, from the appearance of matters about the porchway, that the Court had not as yet broken up for the day. Hungry-looking jurymen were sauntering up and down, and the landlord was fidgetting about, evidently much distressed about the over-roasting of his mutton.

This situation of things, however, was in so far favourable, that it gave me an opportunity of changing my dress, and the messenger having taken his place, with a nipperkin of brandy before him, at the door of the room, I patiently awaited the arrival of the personage whose mandate, I had no doubt, would instantly restore me to my liberty.

Accordingly, in about half an hour, (it was by this time close upon midnight,) my ears were at length gratified with the well-known "Justice-ayre march," performed upon a couple of cracked trumpets in the street below me, and accompanied with a sufficient buzz of "the Lords!!!—the Lords!!!" and, throwing up my window, I could soon distinguish the principal feature of the advancing procession. His Lordship held in his right hand an umbrella, for the protection of his wig and cocked hat; and his left being, with equal propriety, occupied in tucking up the skirts of his robe, his short bandy-legs were seen stumping vigorously through the mud—the bailies and trumpeters in advance, on each side a waiter or two with tallow-candles in paper-lanterns, and the usual rabble in the rear.

My messenger had taken care that our arrival should be announced the moment his Lordship came up stairs; and, in a minute or two, I was summoned to his private apartment, where I found him already stripped of his judicial trappings, and thundering about dinner, with his hands in soap and water. The officer staid without, and Thirleton ordered his servant off also, the instant he perceived me.

"And what's the upshot, doctor? Eh, man, what's come o't?"

"Oh, my Lord, there's been some total mistake. I shan't blame your Lordship; but you've been deceived, played upon, altogether."

"Deceived, doctor!—The deil's i' the man! was you no gaun to fight him after all?"

"Nothing farther from my thoughts, Lord Thirleton. I never dreamt of such a thing."

“Ca’ canny now, doctor; dinna think to quizzify me, man.—I’se haud ye bound ower in five hundred merks—no a penny less—the law’s imperative. I canna help it, if ye were my father.”

“You may bind me over in five thousand pounds if you have a mind, my Lord. I only wish to know where all this nonsense has come from.—Who told you all this cock-and-a-bull stuff?”

“Na, since you’re laughing, friend, I believe I maun believe ye.—God pity me! what could have put this in the woman’s head?”

“The woman, my Lord?—what woman?”

“What woman, doctor? Wha but your ain wife, to be sure.—I’m sure of it, had it no been her coming to me hersell, wi’ the drap in her een, I’m free to say’t, that, gown or no gown, I’m ane of the last that would have liked to interfere in ony sic a job between gentlemen, mair especially when ane o’ them was a friend o’ mine ain.”

“My wife come to you! Good Heavens! what is all this?—I’m made a fool of, my Lord—I’ve been jested with—I’ll trace it out somehow.”

“Trace it out, man? there’ll be nae great wark there-away.—But you really did not gang north to ca’ out Lord Lascelyne? Speak truth now, doctor; nae mair o’ your fun.”

“Fun? I never was more serious in my life. I have no acquaintance with Lord Lascelyne,—no quarrel with him.—I should as soon have thought of calling out your Lordship.”

“Hoots, hoots, where *are* we now?—Pity my heart! do you no ken what a’ the world’s been ringing about? Do you no ken how he’s treated your cousin?”

“My cousin, my Lord?—If you mean Lady Lascelyne, I have neither seen her nor heard of her for years.”

“O dear, O dear! here’s been a braw rumpus about naething.—Od, man, is’t possible that ye really have not heard about Lord Lascelyne’s parting wi’ his wife, and the French madam, and a’ thae doings?—Ye’ve

surely been in a dream, or else out o' this warld a'together.—No heard o't?"

"Never, never—not a syllable—at least, not one that I understood."

"Ay, ay," said he, "I begin to hae a glimpse o't now. Folk, kenning the connection, hae been blawin' laigh afore you.—Od, man, but this is wonderful!—And what garr'd ye take that auld firebrand Captain Cuthill wi' you?"

"Me take Captain Cuthill with me! why, I took none of him. He was invited to the Marquis's shooting-party, and we happened to ride together—that's all.—I left him at Lord N——'s."

"Body o' my saul, but that's a story!—Poor lady! Od, man, your poor wife's had a sair time o't, though. We maun send aff an express to her directly."

"Nay, my Lord," said I, "that's my work. I shall set off instantly."

"No till ye've ta'en your dinner at ony rate, man.—Ay, and now I think on't, I'll haud you to our bond yet. Od, I'll hae you down for the five hundred merks."

"Five hundred devils!" I cried, losing at length all patience. "Does your Lordship really mean to insult me? Have I not told you—do I not tell you now, as I am a man and a gentleman, that the whole of this is nonsense—mere impertinence—balderdash?"

"Hooly, hooly—Ye said ye had heard nothing of his treatment o' the lady; and how do I ken what ye'll be after, now that ye have heard of it? I'll have ye bound—ye needna say a word. Here, Thomas, (ringing the bell,) here, gae away and bring in the clerk o' court.—Ne'er a foot sall ye stir till it's done, my braw man."

I took this in high dudgeon; but seeing that he was quite beyond my powers of arguing, I submitted to the necessity of the case, went through the required ceremony, and then bowed, retiring.

"Na, na, doctor; noo that we've gotten our turn done, ye must not cast up your nose that gate. Od, man! do you not see yoursell that I could not help it? The deil

may care wha kens, I hate these jobs as bitterly as ony poison that ever was brewed — but what could I do? Women greeting, oaths on saul and conscience, a regular petition frae that gomeril of a Depute, (that I should say sae!) that ramstam gomeril. — If I had been in *his* place, I can tell you I would have seen them far eneugh or I would have — But what signifies speaking, man? it's a' settled now — send ye aff your man to Edinburgh, and stay to your supper wi' the Court. Bless your heart, man, ye little ken me. Did I no pick out the very drunkenest messenger we have? Sure, I thought Davie Macalister would have taigled at every public, and never gotten to the Highlands until ye had a' time to be in France, if ye liket. Come, come, it's no wi' my will that I meddle wi' gentlemen on these occasions. Troth, man, I wadna be blate if it were sae. I've maybe dune as ill a deed mysell or now, in the days o' my youth — And, after all, is not she your near kinswoman? And what was the mighty marvel, if folk did think that ye would like to see what his skin was made of? Ye've your ain reasons, nae doubt; but faith, man, I'se make nae round-about's wi' you; I think if I had been as sib to her as you are, I might have been drawn on to take some notice of such behaviour mysell. — Here, rax me the ink-stand; stay a moment — I'll write just a line."

I stood by him while he scribbled a note. He rung his bell again, and said, ere I could interfere to prevent him — "Here, man and horse directly, and let that be in Edinburgh ere we're six hours aulder."

The servant vanished, and he turned to me again. "Come away to your dinner now; your horse is forjaskit at any rate, and sae's yoursell. He'll be in Edinburgh lang ere you could be — Come away to your dinner — I hear the trumpets."

To say truth, I felt so much annoyed and perplexed, that, upon a very little reflection, I was easily satisfied it was quite as well to take matters leisurely. My wife's behaviour was still inexplicable — the story of my cousin was still a mystery — a thousand agitating thoughts were

about me. I said to myself, I shall at least go coolly to the unravelling of this knot.

I obeyed, therefore, the commands of my Lord Thirleton, and proceeded in his train to the scene of action. A large party of magistrates, jurymen, advocates, solicitors, all the hangers-on of a Scots Circuit Court, dined (or supped) together at a long table ; the Judge at the head thereof, and the clerk officiating as croupier. An imposing scene, certainly, if it still linger in all its honours. The two cracked trumpets brayed forth the triumph of every pledge ; and the most fearful culprit, who was to grace the next day's bar, might at least have consoled himself with the assurance that he could not sleep less that night than those who were to try him.

CHAPTER XXVII.

HAVING no concern with the judicial business, I took my sleep out ; and it was late in the day ere I drew my bridle at the mouth of Lady Stair's close, where Joanne had taken up her abode, in a lodging-house, kept, as I afterwards discovered, by a leading member of the Society for the Conversion of the Chinese. However much I had been annoyed with the absurd incident of yesterday, you may believe that nothing could be farther from my thoughts than seriously to blame my poor wife for the part she had acted. She burst into tears on seeing me, and clung round my neck with infinite passion. It was some time ere I could get her calmed sufficiently to answer in an intelligible manner the questions I naturally proposed, touching the mistake into which she had fallen, and the circumstances which had given rise to it.

"Oh, Matthew," sobbed she, "what could I do? Mrs Mather told me she was sure it was so ; and the Principal too, the good worthy Principal, he said hé knew your temper, and that nothing would restrain you."

“Mather! Good heavens! Joanne, where, how have you fallen in with these people? You know how I abominate them?”

“Oh, now, Matthew, don’t speak that way: I’m sure you have not a better friend in this world.—I met them both at Lady Carjarg’s; and when they knew who I was, I’m sure they spoke as kindly of you, as if you had been their own child. He’s an eminent man, the Principal. O dear! to think of remembering old trifles of that sort, and especially now, when they are in this sore affliction—this grievous distress indeed—and young Mr Mather too, and the girl—oh, you have no notion what a state the whole family are in.”

“The family!—the farrow!—Don’t breathe that name again, Joanne, if you love me.”

“Oh, Matthew, this is a very unchristian temper. Do, my dearest, do but consider how many sins you have let go down upon this wrath.”

“Come, come, Joanne, you have not eat a bushel of salt with these gentry yet; I beg you will not mention them. I hate them—is not that enough?”

“Hate? Oh, what a word is that? But surely you don’t hate your poor cousin too, that they all told me you were so fond of, when you were children about the house together. Poor woman! I’m sure you’ll at least pity her. I never saw her, you know, but once, and that’s a long time ago now; but from any thing I recollect, I’m sure she is not a creature to be hated. How black you look, Matthew!—Oh! your look distresses—it frightens me to see you. Oh, my dear Matthew, you must strive with this violent temper of yours. My dear, dear Matthew!”—and so she burst into tears again.

“I wish, my love,” said I, when she had recovered herself again—“I wish, my dear girl, you would tell me plainly what all this story is. That old crafty lawyer told nothing that was intelligible. Lord Lascelyne and his wife have parted? How? when? why? Tell me the story as it is.”

“He has treated her like a beast these two years,

Matthew ; but although every body else suspected something of it, she never said a word to any of her own people — She never gave the least hint of it to poor Mrs Mather."

"Mather again !—for God's sake, Joanne ——"

"Oh, don't speak such words, Matthew ! — But she bore it all in quietness, you see, till at last he went the length of bringing that woman home to the house."

"Woman ! what woman ?"

"That bad bad Frenchwoman, Matthew ; a player, an opera-dancer, with a husband of her own too, they say. He brought her to the very house, and made her sit down at his wife's table."

"And she left the brute ?"

"Ay, brute indeed. She went off directly ; that is, in the middle of that very night—she and her child."

"And whither ? Where is Katharine ?"

"That no one can tell. She has not been heard of yet. Nobody knows any thing ; but most people think she has gone abroad. As for the poor Mathers ——"

"Once more, never say that word again, Joanne. — Katharine has really disappeared ?"

"Totally—totally. Lord Lascelyne has sent in every direction, for he was mad at the boy being taken away—but all in vain. Her mother too—but no trace—none whatever."

"Poor Katharine !"

"Ah ! that's my own Matthew ! I knew you would feel for your cousin. I knew you could not have the heart to dislike her."

"Dislike her ! O Joanne, little do you know me !"

"I do know you, Matthew ; I know you better than you do yourself. I always said that I was sure you would feel this most deeply ; and indeed, you know, if it had not been for that, they could never have persuaded me to go to Lord Thirleton's."

"Ay, ay—I see how it all is now, Joanne. But stay, are all your things ready ? Shall we set off in the morning ?"

"To-morrow morning?"

"Yes, why not to-morrow? What have we to do here?"

"There's the annual Anti-popery sermon to-morrow in Lady Yester's. I would fain stay one day, Matthew, if you please. I have never heard the Principal."

"Eternally confound the canting scoundrel! — Come, Joanne, give directions to your maid, and I'll order the carriage. I can't bear to stay here, after all that has happened. That rascal — rascal — Lascelyne!"

"O my dear Matthew! let's go by all means; don't frighten me with those looks of yours — remember who says 'Vengeance is mine.' You must not—you will not — O Matthew! consider that you are not alone in this world."

"My dear girl," said I, taking her in my arms, "I was not even thinking of what you imagine. Let us go to London, though; I can't bear to be stared at here."

"My dearest Matthew, I am your wife, your own wife — I will do any thing you please. — Let us go, since you say so."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

I HAD never been in London before; so I need not tell you how my first two or three weeks were spent. I made my wife see as many of the sights as her health could justify, or my persuasion accomplish; and, after changing our quarters three or four times, from a hotel to a lodging house, back to the hotel again, and so forth, we at last settled down into the quiet tenants of a smallish but very comfortable house of our own — not the house in which you have so often visited me, but in the same street, though of rather a more elegant character.

Here we awaited the meeting of Parliament in rather

a humdrum style of existence ; for I had almost no acquaintances, and my wife's world-spurning mood was, as you may probably have suspected long ere you reach this page, too deeply seated for any exertions that I could bend to its eradication. When Parliament met, I, of course, became involved in a world of purely masculine employments. I was introduced to ministers and men in office ; I was admitted into clubs ; I sat on committees in the morning, and heard debates in the evening : I was visited by Scotch aspirants, of every shade of the disgusting. Dinners, disputes, Pitt, America, Franklin, —all the bustle of the day and the hour rung in my ears. My poor wife heard as many sermons, and gave as many tea-drinkings as she had a mind. I really began to fancy myself quite a public character.

The grandest epoch, however, was that when the Honourable Member for Maldoun made his maiden speech. This occurred when the before-mentioned Fishery bill was brought forward. I had lived for several years near the coast, I had property on it, had made myself master of the subject, and I really did deliver a very fair speech. — A business-like sensible statement of facts, unhackneyed arguments, briefly and unflourishingly produced ; — such were my materials, — and the outlandish utterance, I believe, did more good than harm ; for its novel barbarity excited good humour at the opening of the affair, and that is generally, in such cases, more than half the battle. In short, I did make a very respectable appearance, (for a Scotch Member,) and we carried our bill by a triumphant majority.

It would have been as well, in every point of view, if I had continued Single-speech Wald ; but this was not the case. On the contrary, sir, I was so much gratified with my success on that great occasion, that nothing, forsooth, would please me, but I must say a few words when, in about a fortnight after, a question of quite another description, — a public, political, national question, — a question about America and England, — came on the carpet. Total failure was the consequence ; the

House had no notion of listening to my Sawney brogue in relation to a theme of this sort. In short, I felt, ere I had been on my legs three minutes, that every one considered my uprising as a piece of arrant presumption. I caught glimpses of sarcastic eyes twinkling upon me from every corner, and the solemn, fixed attention of the Speaker struck me all of a sudden as mere mockery. I perceived I was quizzed ; I heard feet shuffling — noses blowing — hems — coughs — snuffing — sneezing. In a word, I understood my situation ; and, rousing myself to the utmost, thundered out one great, long, unmeaning lump of a sentence, with the confidence of a kettle-drum ; and then, with a ton, at least, of bile in full ferment within me, I floundered myself down into my seat.

No notice of any thing I had uttered was taken by the two speakers who followed ; and, indeed, this was not very wonderful, since of what I had meant to say beforehand, I, upon reflection, was quite sensible that I had in reality brought forth scarcely a fragment. The third in hand, however, being a professed joker of the House, a very fine, polished, courtly punster, thought fit not only to advert to something of my attempt towards argument, but, in doing so, to make some sly allusions to my *quondam* profession ; and, moreover, to mimic one or two of the tones of my voice, and not a few of my improvements on the pronunciation of the English tongue, in a way that produced an universal titter, which again terminated in something very like a horse-laugh. I sat boiling — every eye upon me — until he had finished his oration ; and then, starting up, rattled forth, to the total astoundment of every one who had the least knowledge of what is usual there, a coarse, blunt strain of angry invective, in which (for my sins) were interwoven certain most unparliamentary flowers of rhetoric, such as *stuff*, *impertinence*, *Saddler's-Wells' wit*, and I know not what atrocities besides. A prodigious fuss of *order ! order !* followed — worlds of appeals to the chair — all manner of solemn cant ; and, after fuming for a quarter of an

hour, "the gentlemen mutually explained," — "Mr Speaker took the honourable members' word, that this affair should go no farther," &c. &c. &c. as is the established and venerable etiquette of St Stephen's, whenever TRUTH [as between man and man] is so forgetful of propriety as to come forth in her own naked unloveliness.

It so happened, that a certain old, officious numskull, by name, The Right Honourable Sir Jonathan Le Grand, of Bulmerhampsleigh Priory, in the county of Nottingham, Baronet, thought himself entitled to come forward upon this occasion as the "mutual friend," forsooth, of the two honourable members who had officiated as the heroes of this "highly unpleasant little *fracas*." This jackass was seen fidgetting about from bench to bench during the rest of the debate; and, when the House broke up, behold I found that a party had been made up to sup the same evening in Spring-Gardens, for the express purpose of bringing Messrs Wald Barr and Skipington together over a bottle of champagne, that no remains of any thing like misunderstanding might linger in the minds of two gentlemen, who, if they but knew each other's real merits, could not fail to be on the best possible footing! — Mr Skipington having agreed, I, sensible that, if he had been first, I had been most, in the wrong, did not well know how to refuse; — and to the tavern in question we, about eight or nine in number, some Whigs, some Tories, did accordingly and forthwith adjourn.

The supper went off very pleasantly; and, the bottle circulating with great rapidity, all were soon in prodigious spirits, my witty antagonist included. He was the soul of the festivity; he sung delightfully, and told Joe Millers to admiration. In a word, even my sulky temper was smoothing itself before the fascination, when the same worthy who had originally projected this festivity of conciliation, being now in a state of the most egregious hilarity, took it into his head to call upon Mr Skipington for a specimen of one talent, one extraordinary talent,

with which the company had not yet been favoured. This request was, after the usual allowance of entreaty, complied with; and I soon perceived that the witty creature was pouring forth an extemporary ditty, each several stanza of which was devoted to some particular member of the company round the table—a piece of the merest buffoonery, though, I admit, not executed without a very considerable display of a certain sort of cleverness. The wine had so completely done its duty, that when he came to me, (for he went round the table quite regularly,) behold once more an exquisite mimicking of the Scotch doctor!—I could not stand it:—it was the affair of half a moment:—my glass flew at his head, and missed the mark by a hair's-breadth.

You may picture for yourself the hubbub—and you may also figure the solemn pause of dead, universal silence which followed that.

In three minutes four of the party were enclosed within an adjoining apartment, and Skippington and I lunging at each other by the light of two pairs of candles.

I was quite cool, sensible to the very core of my absurd misbehaviour; he, on the other hand, was as hot as Lucifer—and with some reason, indeed, might he be so. Three or four passes were interchanged: I received his point in the flesh of my sword-arm; and was never more happy than when this afforded me the opportunity of making a very handsome apology.

In a word, it had been fated that I should be the doctor that night. I fastened my bandage *secundum artem*, and was conveyed home in considerable pain and shame, and, in spite of champagne, I assure you, in the most perfect sobriety.

CHAPTER XXIX.

MY wound, though at first of little apparent importance, proved troublesome, in consequence, perhaps, of the irritable and feverish condition of my feelings when I received it ; and, even after it was healed up, the deep disgust I had conceived for St Stephen's Chapel, or (which was the same thing) my own unfortunate exhibition there, left me little disposition to go abroad. My wife, too, who had, I need scarcely say, been terribly shocked with what had happened, was now in a very feeble state both of mind and body, and demanded all my attention. In a word, I became a recluse in the midst of the great city ; and, of course, nobody took the trouble to notice it. I seldom quitted my house at all until dusk, and then used to walk up and down the streets with as perfect a feeling of solitude, as if the crowds of people, passing and repassing me, had been the trees of some central forest, or waves roaring below me upon some untrodden beach.

During my recovery, Joanne used often to entertain me with the curiosity which some servants' stories had excited in her provincial mind in regard to the house next to ours, and the strange behaviour of its unknown inhabitants. The windows in front of this house, she said, had never once been opened since we came to reside there, nor, so far as she could hear, for some time before. To the street it had all the appearance of total desertion. No person ever knocked at the door, — no carriage ever stopped there ; the window-shutters were always barred, and the glasses as dim and dusty as if the air had not reached them for years and years. Yet the house *was* inhabited. A little dog had been heard barking through the partition-wall : this was the first hint of there being any body within. But, afterwards, a young woman-servant had been seen in the little garden behind, appa-

rently returning to the house in that way from the Mews-lane. More lately, a beautiful child, evidently a gentleman's child, had been seen playing once or twice in the same little garden — but quite alone. Still the same desolation reigned all over the external appearance of the house.

The servants had, of course, framed many more or less satisfactory solutions of all this mystery. One repeated strange stories of forgers and coiners, and shrewdly suspected, that some dark traffic of that kind was carried on in this light-eschewing family. Another told of villains who make a trade of inveigling persons into some quiet corner, where all means of detection are absent, and there murdering and burying them, for their money, or for revenge. A third added to this, that a dead body, with visible signs of strangulation about the neck, had not long before been found floating in the river ; and a fourth had often heard that murdered men were occasionally tumbled into some of the great sewers, and so conveyed into the Thames in a fashion that set all inquiry at defiance.

The boy, meantime, had not appeared for some days past ; — and Joanne had listened to the maids' commentaries on this, until she had almost persuaded herself that some deadly harm had come over the little innocent. I laughed at all this ; observing, that it was most probably some poor devil sheltering himself from his creditors ; but, at the same time, my curiosity was a little touched — and, after I had begun to stroll about in the evenings, I certainly did often stop to contemplate the mysterious abode, the condition of which I found to have been described to me without any exaggeration.

I also, happening to have my own private parlour to the back of the house, used often to cast my eyes upon the garden, — but without seeing either the child or the woman-servant I had been told of. It was now fine spring weather, moreover, and yet this garden remained without any semblance of attention being paid to it. Every other garden about had been newly trimmed for

the season, and ours among the rest ; but there, all was desolate, just as the winter had left it.

At last, one afternoon, as I was alone in my apartment, accident (for I had really begun to desist from thinking of these matters) drew me to the window, and behold there *was* a child in the garden. The wall between was not low, but I could see him distinctly—a very fine-looking little fellow, dragging a child's cart and horses through the long ragged grass of the neglected plot. I perceived that he looked up towards the windows of the house now and then, and smiled as if somebody was attending to his motions ; but, although I would fain have thrown up my own window, I was sensible that this could not be done without some noise, and, therefore, contented myself with keeping my eye on the boy until he left the garden ; — which he did not long afterwards.

This stimulated anew a curiosity, which certainly could not lay claim to any very dignified character ; but I was idle, and fanciful at any rate, — and, thenceforth, I never allowed my window-sash to be down in the daytime, thinking that the next time the little gentleman made his appearance, I should be able, if there were nothing before me but my Venetian blind, to obtain, perhaps, some glimpse of the person, who, as I thought, had been watching him from within the house while he was at his sport ; and thus, in short, to penetrate something of the mystery which had so long been perplexing us all.

I adhered to this new device for a week or two, but finding nothing to result from it, and even the little boy not appearing again, had begun to depart from it.

I was sitting, however, by myself one night, reading my book, when, happening to feel my room overheated, I threw open the window, and was detained leaning over it by the extreme beauty and serenity of the moonlight. Suddenly my ear caught sounds—sounds of grief apparently—and, watching for a moment, I became satisfied that they proceeded from the neighbouring house. However I had smiled at the servants' dark conjectures and

tales, I confess that this lamentation, the first sound of human voice that I had ever heard proceed from this mysterious quarter—I confess that the groans I heard, together with the lateness of the hour, and the profound death-like silence which reigned over every thing besides—I confess that all this moved in me, not a feeling of simple curiosity merely, but a crowd of feelings which I could not analyze on the instant, nor shall I be idle enough to attempt describing them now. Let it suffice, that I obeyed the impulse of the moment. I fastened a cord to the little iron balcony of my window, dropt upon the turf below, and having often before noticed that a certain horse-chestnut tree in my garden threw some of its branches partly over the wall which separated it from the adjoining one—to this tree I walked, and fairly began to climb it.

I soon was higher, much higher than my wall. I found out the projecting branch which seemed to be most capable of sustaining my weight, and crept along it. I could now see that there was light in a window—the same window towards which the boy had seemed to cast his eyes when he played on the green. Could I get a yard or two farther, I might probably see something of what was going on within that room. The sounds came upon my ear, every moment more clearly, more distinctly. Heavens! a woman's voice!—what ruffian deeds may be doing in this guarded lair of guilt! Why did I not bring my sword with me? I could go back for that—in the meantime, let me see if possible what is the fact. I huddled myself a pace or two farther on—a woman—a lady—a lady alone—I just caught one glimpse of this, when snap went the branch under me. I heard the crash in its progress, but it was too late—I fell, and I fell about as senseless as the timber I had broken.

This was for a moment—no more. I gathered myself up instantly—at least so it seemed to me; and behold, what is here—a man, an oldish man bending over me, scanning my features by the light of his lamp. “As I

live, Mr Matthew!—Oh, my lady, 'tis Mr Matthew, our own Mr Wald, my lady!"

I sprung to my feet. Before me, right before me, three paces off, no more—"Is this under the cope of heaven?—do I dream?—am I mad?—am I dead and buried, and among the beings of eternity?—Katharine, Katharine Wald! do I indeed see thee? Is this life or vision? Behold me once more at thy feet! Katharine! angel! victim! martyred loveliness! Speak—speak—forgiveness!"

She gazed, she extended her arms, she dropt—but not upon the ground—I received her; I lifted her, faint, speechless, shivering, sobbing. I lifted her in my arms; I could have borne her to the end of earth, although I had been pierced with fifty daggers. I bore her into the house—I followed, and the man led me—I placed her where he pointed. She lay with her long dishevelled curls upon my bosom. The man, with instinctive reverence withdrew.—We were alone; no, not quite alone. Her child was asleep, smiling close beside us in the serenity of happy dreams. I gazed upon the infant. She looked upon him too, and she sunk again upon my breast in a passion of lamentation.

How mechanically these old wrinkled fingers do their work! Is it thus that I live over again those moments? Alas! when was that day that I did not live them?

What humiliation on both sides!—and yet what was mine? What signified it to me to say out that which had for years curdled at the roots of my heart?—I had suffered vanity and sinful revenge to lead astray a mind irritated by imaginary wrongs—wronges at least shapeless, nameless, incapable of being clothed in *words*. I had suffered for this? Perhaps so—perhaps not. The external tenor of my life at least had been fortunate, eminently fortunate. Had I not a wife of my own choice—an estate—a station equal at least to my earliest hopes? But her story—how different was this? For any woman to tell the cruelty of her husband is enough, but for Katharine Wald to tell her husband's cruelty to

me—to me that had hated him, and shewn my hatred from the first moment our eyes met—to me that had never spoken to her since she was his wife—that had acted acts of hostility, ay, and worse, of contempt—to me that had ceased to be *her* kinsman from the hour in which I saw *him*—this was bitterness indeed !

And would she have breathed any thing of all this to *me* even now, unless I had forced her to do so by a violent intrusion upon her privacy, and afterwards by all the frenzy of a murderous sympathy ? I cannot answer this, sir, but so it was, that every thing gave way before the torrent of our mingled anguish. I cursed, madman that I was, I cursed the hour in which she saw him ! I cursed him like a fiend. I described the French madam that I had seen him with in his ruin—in her favourite haunt—and grinding my teeth, in an agony that forgot all the world beyond the one spot where she was seated, I, like a savage and a ruffian, clutching at the heart-strings of a prostrate victim, demanded, ay, and wrung from her, the confession that *once* she had been mine.

Such confessions are not made in words—I have no words to repeat. The thing was so. Perdition on my baseness ! I twisted this dagger in that heart in the presence of Lascelyne's child—ay, and in another's presence too !

My poor wife had left her bed, thinking I was sitting up too late, and came into my room (this, indeed, was no very unusual occurrence) to tell me what the hour was. But I need not be particular ; you may easily imagine what her feelings were, when she found the window open and the cord. The servants being alarmed instantly, they discovered one of my slippers on the green, close under the horse-chestnut. A ladder was brought, and one of the first of them that passed the wall was my poor Joanne, made strong and bold both, in spite of her nature and her condition, by the fears, the wild fears which agitated her for *me*.

Katharine was weeping on my bosom, and I took no note of the outcry and bustle—nor did she. Suddenly a

piercing cry was uttered quite close to us. Joanne was within the chamber-door. She had seen with her eyes the agony of that tenderness, and she saw no more.

One convulsion chased another over her delicate frame. Wild reproaches, melancholy wailings there were; but they were all sunk immediately in the screams of her untimely travail.

Horrible hour! I stood in the presence of Katharine a husband, a parent — a widowed husband and a childless father! I stood it all, however. Yes, my soul was chained up within me; — I could contemplate all this havoc — understand it I could not.

I found myself — how long after I know not — in my own house — in my own bed. The same dull leaden stupor still sat upon my brain — the same dead crust of despair dry upon my heart.

CHAPTER XXX.

IN this lost condition of tearless despair I remained for three days, contemplating with as much indifference of disgust as if they had been worms, the servants and doctors that occasionally crept about my darkened chamber before me. I drank as much water in this time as would have drowned me, but broke no bread — absolutely none.

That night, still lying on my bed, I heard a sort of bustling of feet, and a suppressed whispering going on in the staircase with which my room communicated, and a sudden suspicion rushed into my mind, which as suddenly made me rise from my bed. I slipped on my dressing-gown, and opening the door, perceived the end of the pall, which two or three men, treading on their stocking-soles, were carrying into the next apartment. I followed them, and startled by my appearance the whole array of women-servants who were there busied in their preparations. I ordered them all to leave the room instantly. The men set down their burden, and obeyed,

all but one, who stopped for a moment to turn to the women and say, that he was the person who was to fasten the screws, and that they would call him up again when he was wanted. He then laid down his hammers and chisels, and followed the others, still stalking upon the points of his toes, as if the dead were to hear, or the living notice his tread. I said to the females when he had disappeared, "Leave me, all of you, and tell those men too that they have nothing more to do here at present.—Leave me."

I suppose, I spoke in such a manner as to frighten the poor creatures. They all stole away immediately without saying a word—they scarcely even dared to glance at me as they passed me, for I was standing close by the door.

I was alone with my dead—and who the slayer?

"Murdered innocents! no hand but mine shall touch your remains;"—such was my thought as I approached the bed on which they were both lying—the infant beside its mother. I lifted the cloth from Joanne's face. Ah! how calm, how celestially calm!—what a holy tranquillity!—A smile—yes, a smile was fixed on the lips; those soft, silken eye-lashes, in what serenity did they sleep upon the marble!—Poor little floweret! thy leaves were scarcely opened; what a light dream must this world be to thee!—I lifted my wife in my arms; the cold ice crept through every fibre of my frame.—Gentle soul! what a warm and humble heart has been frozen here!—I laid her in the coffin, and then brought her baby and placed it on her breast,—fastening one of the bands round them, so that the position might not be disturbed. I kissed them both, and covered them up for ever!—I had seen too much of death not to be well acquainted with my duty. I did every thing that is commonly done. I shook in the saw-dust; I scattered the perfumes; I drew the napkin over the cold, sweet faces.—"Farewell, farewell for ever!" said I. "At least, Joanne, no other wife shall ever lie upon the bosom that

I *said* was yours! No other baby but yours shall ever claim the last office from these hands!"

I lifted the lid, and laid it in its place, and screwed down the nails. The bodily exertion, perhaps, had roused me too much; or it might be, that I was more softened while they still seemed to be with me. I cannot tell; but I know that I spent the whole night in striding up and down the room beside them, and that when the entering day-light dimmed the lamp, I was still equally without the resolution to go, or the tenderness to weep.

CHAPTER XXXI.

I WAS stalking about, then, in the same dull half frenzy, when some one knocked at the door. Taking it for granted it was some of the servants. I answered in a voice of rage, "Begone!"—but the knock was repeated. I rushed to the door and opened it, (for it was both locked and barred within,) and there was Katharine!—She was dressed as if for going out, and her boy was in her hand.

"Come in, Katharine," said I; "I did not dream that it was you. — Come in."

She entered, still leading the child with her.—I gazed upon her with a sort of awe, and even dread; her cheek was so pale, so bloodless,—her lips so white and bleached,—her eyes so fixed in the gloomy steadfastness of utter desolation.

"Our meeting, Matthew," she said, "has been a sore one; we must now part. I have come to bid you farewell—I, and my boy."

"What! all leave me, Katharine? Look there—do you see what partings I have had already? You too! Alas! why? whither? Are you not still my sister? Is not our blood the same?"

"I must go, Matthew, my retreat has been dis-

covered. I knew from the first moment it must be so. How could that be kept secret that was known to so many,—and under such circumstances, too?"

"Stop, Katharine, stop!" I cried; "let me bury my dead, and I will go with you wherever you will lead me. Alas! what matters place to me now? Do you not see that I am alone in this world? No, no; not alone neither; not quite alone, while I have you to weep with me. Oh, would that I could weep! While I have still an arm to defend you—blood, floods and floods of blood, to flow for you!—Do you not see that Providence has given me to you for your protector?—What fear you from man?—Why fly?—from whom?—What is it that you fear?—Here, any where, 'tis all one—sit down here—sit down beside this black casket of my jewels.—Here let us rest together: what need we care for this world now?"

I had forced her to sit down, but she rose the moment I unclasped her hand.

"Nay, Matthew," said she, still fixing her large glazed eyes upon me—"Nay, Matthew, this is not the way in which we must take what God sends. Remember yourself, I pray you. Be once more a man and a Christian. I, too, have had my sorrows, and I partake yours; but we must not be thus."

"Not thus? God pity me! how can we be?—Can you raze out years and years? Can you recall the days that are gone? Can you blot out the tears that have flowed? Can you smoothe the heart that is seared and scarred all over? Can you soften stone into flesh again? Can you breathe life into the dead?"

"No, no, no, Matthew—you rave, you are mad—you frighten me—even me. Alas! how can I leave you thus—and yet how can I stay?"

"Where is this fiend, this beautiful fiend of yours, that torments you, and never will let you rest? Where is this persecuting fiend?"—

"Matthew Wald!"—

"Where is your husband, your lord, your Lascelyne?"

"Here — here in London — he has been here for several weeks — and now I know that he has traced *you* — and me too, he must have traced me too ; he must have heard all this dark woeful story — he will be seeking me anon."

"Seek you ! I think I may seek him as soon — What is it that he wants ? Is he not contented yet ?"

"My boy, my boy, my only boy, Matthew — he will not leave me even my boy — and the law is on his side — he will tear my child from my breast."

"Demon — devil — he shall tear my heart out of its socket first — Stay here — this arm is the law — Have I not my father's sword yet ? Ah ! Katharine, would not the old man smile——"

"Matthew Wald — You must not speak so of the father of my child — be calm — be yourself — and I will listen to you."

"I am calm as these," said I, laying my hand on the bier beside us — "forgive me my wild words — but do not leave me — stay here — under this roof at least, there is no one can touch you — Stay here, my pretty boy," said I, "these ringlets are for a mother's fingers yet — no step-dame — no dancing adulteress shall pollute these glossy curls with her envious touch — come hither, boy — you have your mother's eyes at least."

I caught up the little fellow, and while I kissed his fair brow, he began smiling and playing with the silken cords, and tinsel ornaments. I saw Katharine's eye swim — and mine too found water at last.

We were sitting by them in this way — I for the first time really melted even to the brink of soothing, when a servant tapped at the door of the room, and I was no longer in a humour to be rude with any thing. — I rose and opened the door immediately. He put a letter into my hand, and told me the person who had brought it insisted upon staying below for an answer.

"I can't be answering letters now, Robert — tell him I shall attend to it to-morrow."

The man made a sign to me to step without the door

— his looks had something so significant that I obeyed it — “My dear master,” said he, “I thought it best to tell you at once. The constables have been at the next door this half hour, and they have at last got into the house and searched it, and I believe this letter is from Lord Lascelyne himself — I think I know the livery ; but the man would not say any thing.”

I stepped into the room again for an instant — told Katharine that I had a little business, but would be with her immediately — and then I read as follows : —

“SIR,

“Nothing could have been farther from my wishes than any altercation, in any shape, with you ; above all, in regard to any subject in which Lady Lascelyne is concerned. Your own conduct has, however, compelled me to act as I am now doing.

“I do not feel myself called upon to enter into any explanation of any part of my own conduct, to one who possesses no title to demand such. I limit myself to the simple facts of the case.

“Your visit to Lascelyne Castle appeared strange to me at the moment ; but I soon was put in possession of the clue necessary for sufficiently explaining that mysterious procedure, though I confess something connected with the history of that warrant is still rather obscure.

“The total ignorance, however, which you, on every occasion, professed of Lady Lascelyne’s movements, for some time satisfied me that you had originally acted in this matter without any communication with her ladyship.

“How far and how long I was right in affixing this interpretation to the language which reached me from various quarters of unquestionable authority, I must now decline expressing any opinion.

“It is sufficient that I have at last succeeded in tracing Lady Lascelyne to the retreat, where, in your immediate neighbourhood, and apparently in pretty close inter-

course with your establishment, she has so long baffled my inquiries.

"I am perfectly aware where Lady Lascelyne at this moment is ; and I take this method of conveying to her the intimation, that, if she supposes herself to have been, or to be, in any way, the primary or the proper subject of my inquiries, no idea can be more perfectly mistaken.

"Her ladyship may set her mind completely at rest on this head. I have not the remotest inclination to disturb her in the enjoyment of that protection which she has been fortunate enough to secure for herself.

"But I am not ambitious that my son should continue to form a part of the same circle.

"My legal title to the possession of my son's person was always indisputable ; and I can scarcely imagine that even Lady Lascelyne could have found an adviser to sanction any doubt she might possibly, in the first instance, have entertained as to this.

"But let that be as it may, I have now simply to inform you, sir, that I am in possession of the proper warrant ; and to suggest that the immediate surrender of my boy's person may be, under all the circumstances of the case, not only the most proper, but also the most prudent, method of terminating this branch of the affair — a branch of it in which I cannot conclude without saying, that I am not a little puzzled to account for your interference.

"The bearer will convey to me immediately your answer : and I trust it will be such as to preclude the necessity of my making any farther use, (which, however, I am instantly prepared to do) of the legal authority now in my hands.

"I have the honour to be

"Your most obedient humble servant,

&c. &c. &c.

"WALD LASCELYNE."

"*Thursday morning, 6 o'clock.*"

"*Wald Lascelyne ! — This is well ! — 'Here's much, Orlando !'*"

I dressed myself, (for as yet I had but half my clothes on,) and, going down stairs on tiptoe, desired to see the messenger. — “You belong to Lord Lascelyne?” said I — “Shew me where your master is.”

The man looked considerably confused, and hesitated for a little.

“I carry the answer myself,” said I — “lead the way — walk.”

He did not dare to shuffle any longer. — “My lord,” said he, “is but at the end of the street.”

“Very well,” said I, with a smile, “that is just as it should be. Stay here a moment, and I shall return.”

“My lord bade me come back with the answer, sir.”

“Ay, ay, stay where you are, my lad ; we shall be all with you directly —” and I pushed him into an anti-room, and was instantly beyond my door.

I found him at the corner, close to the turn-stile. “My Lord Lascelyne,” said I, bowing to the ground — “I fear your Lordship has been early disturbed this morning. Will it please you to take a turn in the park there — the air is better than here in this narrow street ; and we shall talk over our little matters more easily, perhaps.”

Lascelyne followed me in silence — I walked very rapidly, I promise you — until we were fairly among the trees. I halted, and flinging my cloak on the turf, bade him choose for himself.

“Swords !” said he — “two swords, Mr Wald ! — I was not prepared for this, sir, — I assure you I had no such intention.”

“Choose, my Lord, choose,” I answered ; “the blades are good, both of them.”

“Sir,” said he, and he drew himself up in a very stately fashion — I must say that for Lascelyne — “Sir, I refuse no man’s challenge ; but neither do I accept it but upon certain conditions — name your quarrel, sir, and your friend.”

“My quarrel !”

“Yes, sir, your quarrel — Do you pretend to say that

you have any rights over my child? — It was that only my letter referred to."

"Oh no, my Lord Lascelyne, not to that only. Come, come, here is no time for trifling; choose."

"I insist upon hearing what is your quarrel, Mr Wald."

"My quarrel? — You sign yourself, 'Wald Lascelyne,' I think, too? — Come, my lord, draw."

"And wherefore? — Speak plainly, at all events."

"In me, sir, you see the representative of an insulted blood — that is not all, but that is enough — choose, and choose quickly."

"Why, sir, if you think that you have any particular title to fight me because I have happened to have some disagreement with your cousin, that is well enough in its way, and I sh'ant be the man to baulk you — but not here, nor thus, if you please. — I must have my boy, sir, first; and, secondly, I must place him in hands that I happen to approve of — that's my fancy, sir; — and then, Mr Wald, if you have no very particular objection, I rather prefer going through such things in the most received fashion — in short, I choose among my own friends, ere I pick among your blades — that also is my fancy."

"Friends! — Friends to see *us*! — Seconds, forsooth!"

"Ay, sir, seconds; 'tis the rule, and I have no passion for singularities, whatever may be your taste."

"Come, come — when you next fall out with some fop about a pointer, or a dancer, my lord — some pirouetting dancer — this puppy legislation will do finely. I thought we were serious."

"Serious! partly so, partly not, Mr Wald. I consider, (but I won't baulk you, though,) I consider this as rather a laughable hurry of yours, Mr Wald."

"Laughable? ha! — was that your word?"

"Ay, laughable — extremely laughable — quite *hors des regles*."

"The *regles*! — Madam Francoise has taught you that pretty word, too. — Come, come, do you wish me to spit

on you — to kick you — to crush you — to hew you down like a calf?"

"Sir, you are a ruffian: but give me your swords——"

How beautifully we went through all the parade! — how calmly we proved the distance! — how exactly we took our attitudes! You would have sworn we were two professed fencers — and yet for me — I knew almost nothing of it — I had never tried the naked sword before but once; and you know how —

But after the first minute of ceremony, what a joke was all this! — I rushed upon him, sir, as if I had been some horned brute. I had no more thought of guards and passes than if I had been a bison. He stabbed me thrice — thrice through the arm — clean through the arm — *that* was my guard — but what signified this? I felt his blade as if it had been a gnat, a nothing. At last my turn came — I spitted him through the heart — I rushed on till the hilt stopped me. — I did not draw my steel out of him. — I spurned him off it with my foot.

"Lie there, rot there, beast —!" a single groan, and his eye fixed.

The Stagyrite says you cannot hate the dead: — He never hated. — I dipped my shoe in his blood.

I rushed home as if I had had wings; but my courage forsook me at the threshold.

I entered the room where Katharine was — (she was still seated there, her child on her knee, waiting for me) — I entered it with my cloak wrapped about me. I sat down at some little distance from them — and in silence.

"Matthew," said she, "where have you been? — what have you been about? — your looks were strange before — but now ——"

I drew my cloak closer about me.

"Oh! Matthew — your eyes! — will you never compose yourself?"

"Never, Kate."

“But now you were softening. Come hither, Matthew. — Oh! try if you can weep.”

I drew out my sword from below the cloak — I held out the red blade before me — the drops had not all baked yet — one or two fell upon the floor.

“Speak, Matthew! what is this? — Speak! — Ha! God of Mercy! there is blood upon that sword.”

“Ay, blood, my cousin — blood.”

“My husband! my Lascelyne!” — I heard no more. Heavens and earth! that I should write this down! One shriek — one — just one!

Fainted? — swooned? — Dead! oh! dead. — I remember no more.

CHAPTER XXXII.

I know, I feel, that your kindness would willingly spare me, if it could. I know that you would fain have me preserve secrets, dark, for the most part, as those of death and the grave, even from you. At this moment, however, it so happens, that nothing can give me any additional uneasiness.

Here am I sitting in my own comfortable easy-chair, in my own snug library; — a bright fire is blazing at my side; — every thing is light and warmth about me. Old I am, yet I feel strength in every fibre. My perceptions are as clear as ever they were in the morning of my days. I can walk, ride, read or write, as nimbly as if I were a man of five-and-twenty years. I drink no wine when by myself; but a bottle of water stands near me on the table. Here, sir, I drink your health. — I have drained my glass to the bottom.

And yet, it is I that can look back upon that wilderness of horrors! These are the very limbs that were bound and chained in yon dreary cell; — these are the very eyes that used to watch and curse that one dim straggling day-beam, descending from an immeasurable

height above me upon those dark slimy stones ; — this is the frame that cowered and shivered in yon corner. It was I that raved up and down that dungeon like a new-caught lion ; — it was I that bellowed to the moon ; — it was I that coiled myself up like a trampled worm, whenever yonder low iron grating was opened, and the hard-faced barbarian stood, whip in hand, before me.

What grovelling fears — what icy sweats — what terrible dreams — more terrible even than the waking terrors of madness ! What a thirst, and yet what a dread, for the approach of sleep — what dead blanks of total oblivion — what agonies of remembrance — what furious rushing again into the out-stretched arms of ever-watchful Despair !

To be nailed on the summit of a precipice high as the clouds, but no clouds in the sky ; all clear and bright above ; all around gulfs, and measureless plains of snow, dazzling and glaring ; — to sit gazing with hot brazen eyeballs, and see some white mass moving near me, and then suddenly the great, black, clumsy bear crawling on — on — with his gaping, slavering jaws. The groan of the fearful brute — the hollow, hungry howl of his half-sleepy yawn — the convulsive struggle — the headlong leap — down — down into the fathomless abyss —

To lie battered on the burning rock in the midst of a world of woods — glorious dark green woods — but no shade for me — the tumult of the ever-sounding cataract in my ear, but no drop for that dry glowing tongue — those black and furred lips. To feel the flies crawling and nibbling all over breast and limb, with that eternal busy hum of glittering wings, and the piercing of a thousand little needles — to see one's self eaten away — to trace, with steady eyes, the widening of the fester — to see them working out and in, as in a hive — to see the green creatures dancing up and down your bared nerve — riding

on your stretched vein, and powerless to move even one fibre—a self-loathsome mass of corrupted clay—rotting, but not dead—a living jelly—oh ! how exquisitely, how intensely living ! ——

Ha ! how glorious to be thus mounted. On, on, I say, thou most magnificent of Arabs ! The snow will chill your hoofs if we linger — they shall have a warm bath, though, and that right soon. Come on, I say — advance, ye blackening squadrons ! — Ay, flap all your banners, and blow your trumpets — I love the sound of them. Down, down, I hew you ! Do you think to wound me ? — Strike, then, with a thousand swords — ha ! I have been steeped, like Achilles, in Lethe ; but heel and all, ye ruffians ! heel and all ! — Maces ! straws ! this skull is fire — can your hammers cut the flame ! These are splendid cuirasses — ha ! do they shiver so easily ? Ho ! ho ! falcon, dost thou scream ? and thou too, black one ! Come, little raven, you may come down now — here is blood enough for you to wade in. ——

Such are thousands of the fragments my mind has been able to retain of its then shattered image — Gleams — snatches out of the waste of blackness.

A softer in so far, — at all events, a more connected dream, floats at this moment over my memory. Let me arrest the vision. Remain for an instant, thou little mountain-lake, and let no wind disturb the image of that old castle upon thy calm cold bosom !

How dead is the stillness of this water — how deep, and yet how clear — not one weed, one ripple, to intercept the view — every pebble at the bottom might be counted — 'tis sheer rock here in the middle — How deep may it be, old man ? — did you never sound it — you that have ferried it so many hundreds of times ! You shake

your head, my friend — 'tis no matter — What is this pavement here upon the brink? — how deeply the stones are worn! — Many strange tales, I daresay, have been told about this old castle of yours — Your mill, I see, is partly built against the old wall — The great wheel stands idle to-day — will you climb the tower with me?

Ah! this has been a grand place in its day, too: What windows — what galleries — what immense fire-places — what a roar the flame must have gone up with — what odd staircases — what dark strange passages — heavens! how gigantic a plant is the ivy — what broad leaves, when they are not troubled with the wall — An apple-tree, too! — Here in the very heart of the hall — just where the table stood — What a dungeon this must have been — the lid rested on that ledge, no doubt — Ha! I see the rings in the wall yet — what a dark hole for a poor creature — that little slit is a mere mockery — Is there any way of getting down? — I think one might venture the leap; — but you smile — how to get up again? — ay, that's the difficulty — well, we'll stay where we are — How black the wall is on that side — the rafters, also, have left rotten ends here and there — they, also, are black enough — Fire? — I understand you — quite burnt out? — How long ago was all this ruin? — you can't say — well, well.

What a beautiful view from this gap — here, stand beside me, there is room enough for us both — What a fine descending sweep to the sea, the silver sea — How clearly one sees all those hills beyond — How richly the coast is wooded; but here you are rather bare, I think — Your turf has never an oak to shade it — How green and luxuriant is the old pasture grass. And more ruins too, I think. Why, you are rich in ruins here. Is this another castle? if so, methinks they must have been good neighbours. A church, say you? — Ay, the chapel — I understand. Will you walk so far down the hill with me, old man? I should like to see their chapel also, since I have seen their hall. Why, you are a very comfortable-looking old lad — who knows but if you had

lived in those days they might have made a monk of you? you would have looked nobly in the cowl — better, I assure you, than the white hat; and better dinners too I will be sworn — but you are contented — you thrive as it is. You have a cheerful cottage here under the tower. How prettily your smoke curls up along that bartizan! I wish you had a few old trees about you, 'tis the only thing you want. — Cut down? What! all of them at once? — Well, this was not very like a lord; but they can't take the water away, and that is beauty enough. As for shelter, why, after all, the tower is between you and the northern blast. You hear it whistling loud enough, no doubt, but what signifies that when the door is barred, and the fire bright, and the pot singing? You may e'en laugh at the wind.

The old man descended from the tower with me, and walked by my side down the hill towards the chapel. There was a light airy wind now, and we could see the sea beyond, quite through the archway. "How entire is this!" said I; "how clean and neat every thing about it is! How cheerily the breeze sweeps through this vaulted passage! — how white the stones are beneath our feet!"

"That," said he, opening a door on the one side, "that, sir, is the chapel itself. You may walk in, if you have a mind."

"How perfect is this too!" said I, uncovering myself as I stepped across the threshold — "No decay at all here, my friend; if the glass were put into the windows again, they might sing mass here to-morrow as well as ever. The brasses on the pavement, however, are a little dimmed for want of feet to polish them. These old knights have few to trouble them now with pacing over their graves."

I walked about, examining monument after monument, and spelling out as I best could the inscriptions and the blazons. What these last were I cannot remember, but they were all the same arms.

"And here," said I, "my friend, here is one of a kind

rather singular — quite out upon the floor by itself. And stop — is not this wood that they have laid by way of lid over the marble? — 'tis so white with age that I took it for stone too at the first. You should push this off, I think. It only hides the top of the carved work."

I was approaching closer to it, when the old miller said, with a very grave and solemn sort of smile upon his face, "Nay, sir, you must not touch that part of it — 'tis not the custom. You had better leave it as it is."

"Why, what folly is this? — You may be sure such a fair tomb must have something pretty on its own cover. — I must see it, my friend."

"Nay, sir, you may do what you please; but I warn you, that you will wish it undone afterwards. You will only frighten yourself."

"Fright! old boy," said I; "nay, then, here for the adventure."

I touched the edge of the timber, and found it rise easily; — but, at that instant — at that very moment when I raised it — I heard a little, feeble cry come out from below it. I leaped back, and cast my eyes upon the old man. He met my look without changing his. — And then, from the same tomb, came three distinct sobs — the same tomb, but not the same voice — and all was again silent.

"Old man," said I, "what is this? Can the dead people utter sounds like these from their coffins? — Surely, I thought there had been rest in the grave, old man —"

"Ah, sir," said he, moving now at length from the door-way, in which he had all this while been standing, — "we cannot tell what strange things are in this world; the quick and the dead have their marvels. — But you have broken the spell, sir — you may lift the lid now — there will be nothing more to alarm you. They never do so, but at the first touch."

His coming so near me gave me courage, and I touched the wood again. No sound followed; — and I moved it gently — quite off its place.

"A pall," said I, "old man! — a velvet pall! — They have left this tomb strangely unfinished, man. — Might one, perchance, remove this too?"

"Sir," says my grave-eyed, yet cheerful-looking senior, "you may do so if you like; but I will tell you what is the truth of it first. — The last lord of the old family — he that lived in our castle, and owned all the country round this place — had but one daughter. A bad, cruel man came, and he married the lady, and became lord of the land too. She had a child, sir; and he, they say, could not bear the sight of it, nor of her, then: — and he drowned them yonder in our lake. That cry that you heard was from the baby; and the three sobs, they were from the mother. They always do so — just as when they were murdered, it is thought — whenever any one touches their tomb. — But we have been used to this all our days, sir, and we make little of it now. — If you wish to see them you may lift the cloth."

I did so, and beheld a glass cover, dim and dusty. The old man took the corner of the pall, and, rubbing it a little, said, "Now, sir, here you may see them both, quite entire; they have been so beautifully embalmed. — Look ——"

"Oh, Joanne! that white face once again! —"

I screamed in my agony, and awoke ——

"Here, sir," cries the keeper, — "here's a pretty-behaved gentleman, truly? — If it were night it were less matter; but no screaming here in the day-time. — Here, squire, get up! Do you feel this — and this — and this? If you wish to halloo so much, we must e'en try to give you some excuse for your noise. — And here's the barber come to shave your head again. Do you think to frighten the barber, Mr Squire? ——"

LETTER TO P. R. ESQ.

(ENCLOSING THE FOREGOING MEMOIRS.)

The blackbird in the summer trees,
The lark upon the hill,
Let loose their carols when they please,
Are quiet when they will.

With Nature never do *they* wage
A foolish strife, — they see
A happy youth : and their old age
Is beautiful and free.

But we are press'd by heavy laws,
And often, glad no more,
We wear a face of joy, because
We have been glad of yore.

WORDSWORTH.

SUCH, dear R —, is the account which our old friend has bequeathed to us of that early part of his life, concerning which neither you nor I ever heard him speak. With the exception of a few passages, which I have found it necessary to strike out of the last two or three chapters, [especially the last of all,] you have the Memoir exactly as he left it in his cabinet.

Why he finished so abruptly, his letter does not say. Whether he did so in consequence of having been painfully agitated in the composition of the concluding pages which you have just read, and therefore fearing to proceed farther ; or whether the many years of which he has said nothing had really appeared to him, in his morbid retrospect, incapable of furnishing us with any materials, either of amusement or instruction, I am

somewhat at a loss to determine. You are quite as well qualified to make guesses upon the matter as I am.

I think you will now have little difficulty in confessing that I was right, and you wrong, in the dispute we have so frequently renewed concerning him. I certainly had formed at first, and retained for a considerable time, an opinion pretty much the same with your own. That a man who possessed health and bodily strength to an extent so very uncommon in people of his years, who took so much exercise daily, who almost every year travelled several thousands of miles, and to the last thought little more of a trip to Paris than of a walk into the city — and, above all, who was, whenever any of us met him in society, the soul of the party, — light, buoyant, airy, and cheerful, to the distancing, not unfrequently, even of our own boyish spirits — that this man should have been in reality the habitual victim of the darkest and most melancholy reflections, was, undoubtedly, a thing not likely to be suspected by observers so young and thoughtless as we both were when we first knew Mr Wald.

The notion that such was the fact — that our “grey-haired man of glee,” (as you used to call him,) was in reality the secret slave of despondency — this notion did certainly find its way by degrees into my mind. The very silence which so lively a companion preserved touching so large a portion of his own life, was perhaps the circumstance that chiefly influenced me in the adoption of the opinion which you always continued to controvert.

Was his merriment, then, a matter of mere affectation? — I believe nothing of the sort. I believe that when we were fairly with him — when the system of seclusion had been fairly broken in upon, the dinner ordered, the cellar ransacked, the company assembled — our friend was exactly what he seemed. I believe he, upon such occasions, entered most thoroughly into all the enjoyments of those whom he had summoned about him. With what an air did he decant a bottle of that old, that

antediluvian, green seal, — with what sprightliness did he not call upon some of us youngsters for a song, — with what festivity did he not join in the chorus — with what solemn waggery did he not propose his fanciful toasts!

But then how seldom did such scenes occur, — who ever heard of his giving more than one, two, or, at most, three dinners in the twelvemonth? And why was this? He was rich far, very far, beyond his expenditure; his generosity we all knew. With his establishment it could have cost him no personal trouble to prepare for a party of that sort — and, God knows, none of us were likely to refuse his invitation. — Why, then, did the circle, the only circle, assemble so seldom around his charming board? And why, in like manner, did he, who spent half of every day out of doors, and walked and rode as freely and boldly as any man of thirty, why did he never, on any occasion whatever, dine abroad? You are aware, I know, that — although the family became his friends almost immediately on our return from India — he never sat even at my father's table but once — and that was on my wedding-day. And after I was married, he that was so fond of my wife, and so very much attached to my children — such is the fact, he never once broke bread, nor tasted one glass of wine, under my roof.

You remember how often we all wondered that he who was almost in every thing so much of the Scotsman, to say nothing of his property lying entirely there, should among all his rambles, never visit his native country.

You may, therefore, imagine how much it surprised us, when we heard that the tour of this summer had carried him northwards.

He had called at my house when I happened not to be at home. He told my wife that he was to set off next morning on his usual summer's excursion, but without mentioning in what direction. I called on him next day, but he was already gone off. His servant said, they believed Mr Wald was going as far as York.

I thought nothing more of it until (this might be about six weeks afterwards) I received a letter from his old valet, stating that Mr Wald was very ill indeed, and that he (the valet) earnestly hoped I would proceed, without delay, to the place where he was lying,—Blackford.

I set off immediately, and travelled night and day without intermission; but I was too late. He was not dead when I arrived, but he had been for many hours speechless, and apparently quite insensible. I think, however, he did know me. I think I cannot be mistaken as to this. His eyes—those finest of all masculine eyes I ever saw—remained fixed upon me—yes, until they were fixed for ever. At all events, I had the melancholy satisfaction of seeing that he expired without pain, and of closing his eye-lids. We buried him with his fathers—a very striking old cemetery, I assure you—piles and piles of leaden coffins all about, the undermost ones, of course, beat quite flat with the weight of the superveners, and one or two rude but highly-curious monuments in the midst. There we laid him—the last of the right line.

His disease was, I believe, nothing but apoplexy. He had wandered out by himself, and was found, after many hours had elapsed, lying in a state of perfect stupor, beside a little waterfall in one of the glens among the hills behind his house.

The same noble disposition which led him to give up the possession of his wife's estate (although the law of Scotland made it his for his life, if he pleased) the moment he recovered the possession of his faculties—the same noble and generous disposition breathes, I assure you in every line of his testament. He has provided, in the handsomest manner, for all his old domestics and dependents; and yet never, I believe, was master or patron more sincerely lamented than he to this hour is, by the whole of these.

I am sure, when you come to London again, you will feel what a blank has been created. Among other matters, he has left me his house here. I went into it the other day, but shall certainly not do so again. To

see his stuffed chair standing in the usual corner — his walking-cane resting against it — his flute hung up on the old nail — all the books about — his paper knife remaining in the heart of Candide — two or three Couriers and Cobbetts still lying upon the table — I confess all this was too much for me. The Hogarths, you know, are yours ; I shall have them packed up forthwith. The set is certainly a very fine one.

What a fortunate thing it is for me that Lord Lascelyne has no son. If he had had but one, I should have been cut out, for a time at least, as the entail only prevents the two estates from being actually held at the same moment by the same person.

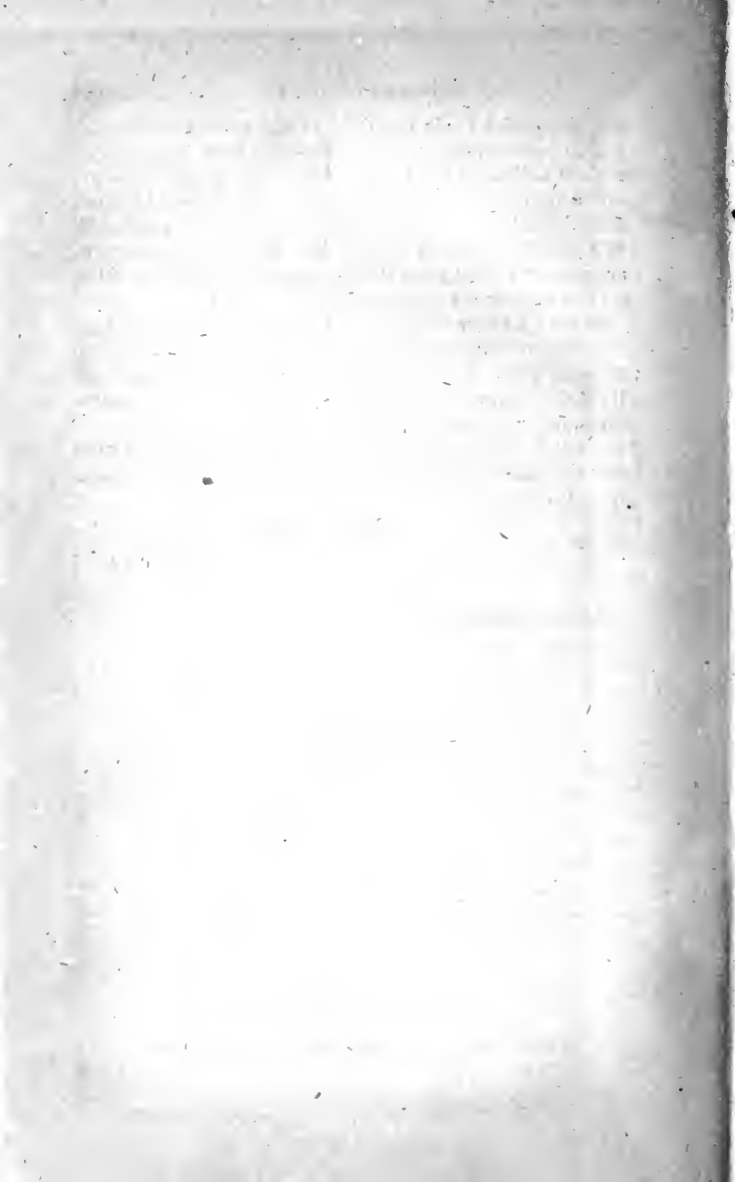
As it is, I mean to go down and take possession next month, in all form ; and the sooner you come to Blackford, the better.

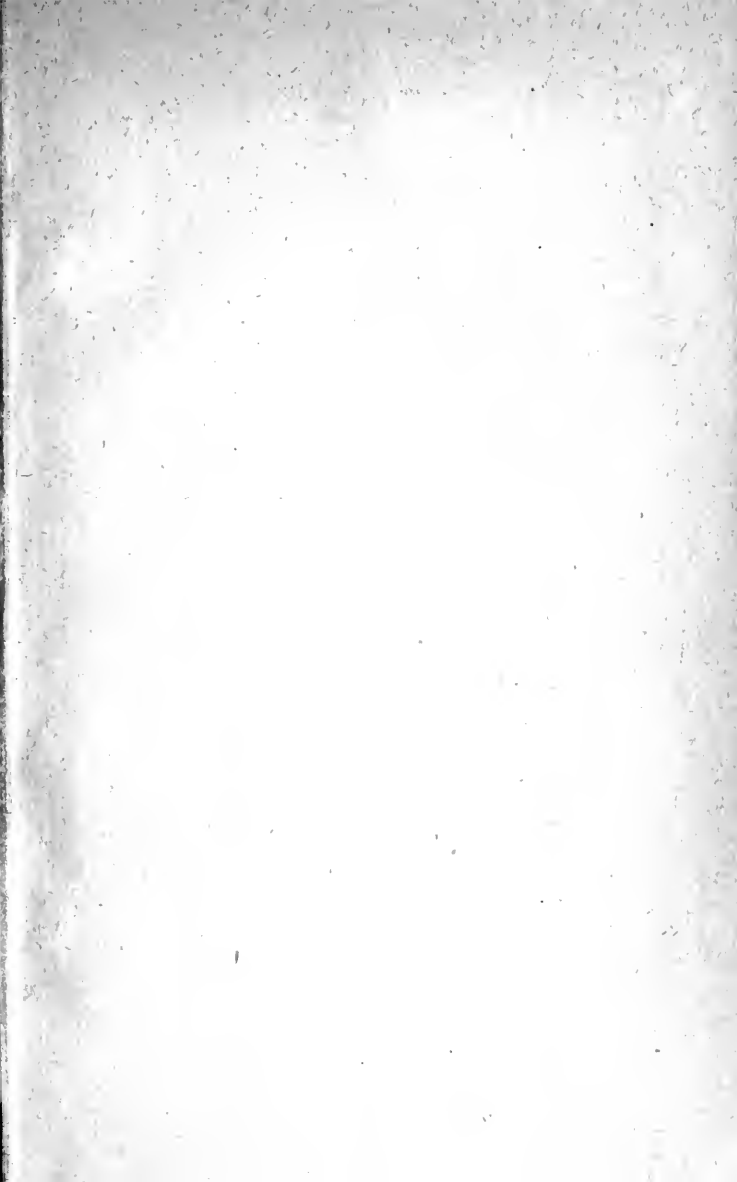
Yours always,

J. W. R.

LONDON, *August*, 1816.

THE END.





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